CONSPIRACY X

SECOND EDITION

Conspiracy X – Second Edition (Unisystem Edition)

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Dedicated to Denis Chapman (1922–2003)

Special Thanks: Rich Spainhour (Military Advisor), Derek Stoelting (Prelim Checking Extraordinaire) and to all the fans.

Eden Studios • 6 Dogwood Lane • Loudonville • NY• 12211

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First Printing, January 2006

Stock EDN5600 ISBN 1-891153-53-6

Printed in the Canada (or so we are told)

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As always,
it started with a
phone call . . .

VALLEN

"Good evening Richard, it's Joan. Aunt Martha is ill and requests your presence."

The second I heard her voice my heart jumped. I tried to speak, but my throat was suddenly too dry. For an interminable moment, I thought my skin was going to crawl off me. I forced back the rising panic. I could handle this. I'd handled it before.

"I'll leave immediately. Joan . . . is it serious?"

"When Aunt Martha is ill, it's always serious." The tone of her voice never changed. Every time I spoke with her she sounded cold and withdrawn, as if what she'd done with her life had turned her to ice, made her forget that she's human. Hell, for all I know, she may not be human.

The drive to Baxter Research and Development Center lasted only 45 minutes. I slowed at every yellow light and came to a complete stop at every stop sign. Still, I arrived far too quickly. I dreaded the meeting. It had been almost a year since I had been called upon. I had hoped they had forgotten me after my last mission. I mean, three agents dead, one of them a close friend. You would think they wouldn't want my kind of help.

I wished I could be satisfied with my position in life—Dr. Richard Vallen, Director of Operations at the Atlanta CDC and Head Research Fellow at Baxter R&D Labs. Despite all I'd accomplished, I had another "job." Who would have thought that little Richie from Saratoga would be saving the world, fighting aliens and bad guys, and making sure all the young girls and boys in the world can be safely tucked in at night? Not me. Nor any other sane man.

After five security checks and one very thrilling retina scan, I entered the safety of my lab. Before I turned on the light, I stood in the darkness and took a deep breath to prepare for my meeting with the ice queen. My inhale was stifled by the smell of menthol cigarettes and expensive perfume. No time to get settled—she was already here.

"Hello, Richard, you made good time."

Joan clicked on the bathroom light. The smoke swirled around her. She stood in the doorway, back lighting revealing only her silhouette. She seemed like some kind of unholy angel. Funny, that's exactly how I see her even without the smoke and lighting. My throat went dry again. Not for the first time I wondered how she bypassed all the security around the place.

"Well, I tried to get here as fast as I could . . . I didn't think you would . . . well, I mean, after last time . . . you just hadn't required my services in a while."

She moved behind my desk, forcing me to take the visitor's chair. "Honestly, there was some reservation about calling you at all. You did manage to wipe out your entire cell the last time. Let's see, was it three or four casualties?"

I bet she smiled as she ripped open my emotional scars.

"It was three, and Pete was a good friend of mine. Took me a year to realize that it wasn't my fault. You never told us what we were up against. You never prepared us—we all knew the risks, and that we were researching extraterrestrials, but you didn't tell us the National Defense Directorate was involved. It didn't matter that we could handle the aliens . . . it was the human puppets with automatic weapons who took us down!"

My voice rose as I spoke but it was mostly to keep me from vomiting. Everything that had ever pissed me off about this insane organization was forcing its way to the surface. I wanted to fly across the room and throttle this woman who had brought so much anguish to my life.

"Finished with your little tirade, Richard? We have no more time for your whining about the Black Book. They are always a concern . . . on any mission. Regardless of what happened to your last team, we need another cell developed in the area. Your position in the CDC makes you the appropriate focal point for the team. You have the connections your group needs to be successful. Choose at least two other scientists. We assembled the remainder of your team.

"As you can see, we have upgraded our HERMES links since your last mission." She

had nodded to a top-of-the-line cell phone/PDA sitting on the edge of my desk. I cursed my agitation and its affect on my observation powers. In this business, such a lapse could get one killed, quickly. "It operates just as the normal commercially available version . . . with some extra features. Your access code is 487j3. Your new team's files will download as soon as you activate it. You should not be so unprepared and outgunned this time."

I picked up the unit. It hummed briefly, no doubt scanning my fingertips and palm's capillary structure, but possibly also my DNA, lymph nodes, and God knows what else. When it was satisfied, it flared to life. I deemed it a small victory that I didn't have to ask her to repeat the access code. Still, I was struck by a sense of impending doom. I quickly glanced through the dossiers and noticed that two of the agents were government assassins. That made me nervous. The third was a psychic. That scared the piss out of me—but granted me a bit of backbone.

"What's going on, Joan? This looks real nasty. I want a full explanation . . . and this time, don't leave out any details."

With an exhale, the smoke filled the half-light of the room. I resisted the urge to open the windows and turn on the lavatory fan. I, of course, would be blamed for violating the smoke-free building regulations. I, of course, could do little but accept responsibility.

"A week ago, we learned that an FBI investigation stumbled onto a scientist doing his own private research into aliens. Under discrete but specific instructions, two FBI agents searched the warehouse the scientist was using and discovered a refrigerated case containing what appeared to be embryos of unknown origin. When they reported in, they were directed to secure the embryos. That was three days ago—we've heard nothing from them since. We did some digging. It seems the scientist in question may be affiliated with the Book.

"Two days ago, we got word from an agent in USAMRID, Maryland. A case with what looked like embryos had showed up. It was verified yesterday that the embryos are to be transported to Dulce. This is where your group comes in. You will learn how the shipment is being transported, intercept it, secure the embryos, and bring them back here. If you can, find out what happened to the scientist, but that's secondary to the embryos.

"Your link also contains files that give the location of the warehouse and a few more details from the USAMRID contact. Familiarize yourself with them and use them to plan your investigation.

"I suggest you examine the personnel files carefully as well. Then make your decision about who else you are bringing into this. Don't take too long. The transfer of the embryos is happening in two days and we must intercept them before they are swallowed up by the Book's main base."

That seemed like a complete recital. I had little time and a very small team. I was going up against a super-secret elite military force—the one that had extinguished half my first team. In my honest opinion, we were all going to get killed. I wondered if maybe I was better off with a less detailed briefing.

JOHNSON

"What are you doing?" Tristan looked kind of disgusted.

Kai turned toward him, revealing the mutilated jelly donut in her hands and the telltale white powder all over her face.

"Um . . . eating my donut. Why?"

I grinned from behind my coffee cup.

"Can't take you anywhere, Kai. You see, Tristan, when she was born her mom thought she had the spirit of the coyote in her or something like that. She likes to rip food apart like she's just killed it. Ever since I've known her, she's been a joy to take to fancy restaurants."

"Oh, so you think you're some kind of wild animal? Great, my first time working with other people in the organization and I'm stuck with a gun-wielding whackball. No offense, but this makes me a bit nervous." Tristan smiled to take the edge off his words, but his tone was sincere.

Kai shot Tristan a plastic smile and took a wetnap out of her worn leather jacket. She carefully cleaned off her fingers and mouth. Tristan stared at her, confused by her reaction. Suddenly, realizing that he might have actually pissed her off, he started to utter a half-assed apology. Kai leaned into him, put her hand on the back of his neck, and pulled him closer, as if to kiss him. Her sweet-smelling breath warmed his cheek.

"I think, Tristan, that you take things a little too seriously. Now that's just a hasty judgment, but I call 'em as I see 'em. And what I see is a six-foot-four Aryan hunk who's spent a little bit too much time alone. I don't think you understand that a little levity goes a long way." While she was whispering to him she scooped up some jelly with her finger.

"As for me being a gun-wielding wacko, well . . . you can't do much better than having me watch your back. So lighten up, kiddo, and we'll all have some fun on this ride." She pulled away from him, smeared the jelly on his nose, giggled, rolled her eyes, and walked away. I handed Tristan a napkin.

"Kai has always been a goofball, but it's her sense of humor that keeps her from being a cynic like Vallen. Don't worry about her. You're wondering if you made an enemy of her—you didn't. She doesn't joke around with people she doesn't like."

"So, Johnson, why do you two know each other so well?"

"A few years ago I was working in South America tracking drug czars for the DEA. I stumbled on a downed craft like nothing I'd ever seen. I settled in to watch the thing. Pretty soon another group showed—Kai and two others. They started moving in on the vehicle. Suddenly, something that looked like a cross between a lizard and a human popped out of the ship and waxed Kai's two compadres. Kai dropped the thing almost as fast as it took out her teammates, but I could see another sneaking up about to waste her. I said what the hell, and shot it from my hiding place. Didn't slow it down much, but it was enough for Kai. Good thing the creatures don't like bullets too much.

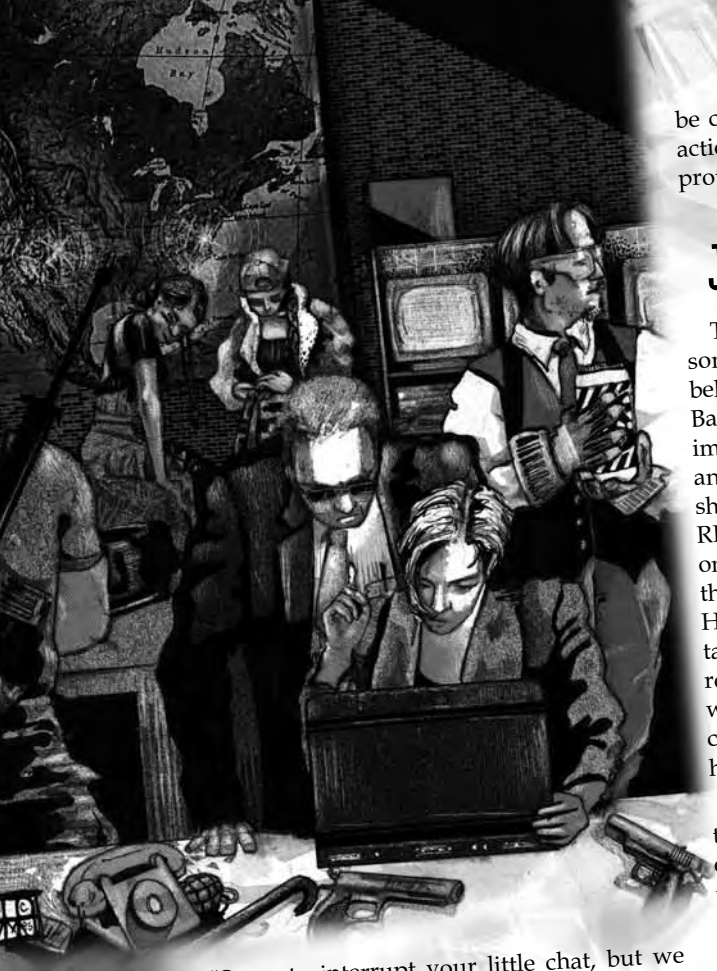
"The next thing I know there's this load of South American military types moving in. I guess just about everyone wanted that ship. Kai started to hightail it out of there, and I ran after her. Eventually Kai radioed God-knows-who and this silent black helicopter comes swooping down. Kai made them wait for me. So after I save this girl, her buddies in the chopper tell me I've seen too much, and that I now pose some kind of threat to national security. They give me a choice—join up or jump out. I thought I was in some kind of bad action flick, but it all turned out to be the 'real' reality, if you catch my drift.

"For the most part I did solo stuff like you've been doing. But sometimes they team me up with Kai on tracking missions. She's pretty tough. She's fast and a crack shot. But she gets cocky sometimes and rushes into situations. My job is to watch her back."

The more I talked about her, the more interested Tristan became. That made me a little antsy. I mean, it's not like I've got any kind of thing for her, but she's like a little sister to me, or maybe a cousin. When Tristan asked the inevitable question, it shook my good mood for the day.

"So, are you and she just friends, or is there something more going on?"

I forced a smile at Tristan. Just then Kai returned, bouncing up behind me.



"Sorry to interrupt your little chat, but we gotta meet Vallen and crew at the lab."

During the drive to Baxter Labs, Tristan kept staring at Kai. She did have that affect on people, particularly those in the conspiracy. Kai saw life as a big adventure, at worst as a black comedy. Maybe it was because she was younger. Then again, she was also psychologically tough. She had served in Project Moondust for several years, recovering crashed alien craft. She'd seen a lot more aliens than most. Handles it well, I gotta give her credit. 'Course, I think she sort of believes she's living in some kind of comic book world where the bad guys are green and scaly. Not sure she fully understands how many bad guys there are in the world, or that most of them are human.

Vallen gets it—that's why he's so down. Clearly burnt out and completely disillusioned. More than anything, the doctor appeared frightened by his involvement in the organization. Until Kai gets betrayed by a human, she'll be content to live in her comic book world of action and adventure. I just hope I'm there to protect her when it happens.

JEANETTE

The six of us sat together in what looked like some kind of high-tech war room, hidden behind some very clever secret passages in Baxter Labs. A screen on one wall projected images of building plans for a warehouse. On another wall, a map of the United States showed little glowing lights indicating USAMRID, Maryland and Dulce, New Mexico. Off to one corner was a computer work station, something Richard called an obsolete "linkup to the HERMES mainframe." On the corner of the table closest to where Richard was sitting was a red phone with no buttons, just a red light that would flash if someone called. Richard coughed and drew my attention to the end of his briefing.

"Johnson, Kai, and Jeanette, you will go to the warehouse where they first found the embryos. You'll be looking for clues, anything that could lead us to the whereabouts of the scientist who originally had the embryos. We think that he may have been NDD, but how he ended up with the embryos and what happened to him are mysteries. If we can secure him, that's a major plus. There's also the matter of the FBI agents, but that's secondary. One thing is clear, these embryos could provide us vital information about alien activity on Earth. We don't want to screw this up."

Richard's voice was filled with confidence. It's what had attracted me to him when we meet a couple years ago. He had always had an air of command around him and seemed filled with ambition. Still, there was a darkness in him, some secret too terrible for him to share. I was jealous—there seemed to be no place for me in his world. We split, and in time, I got over him. Then, out of the blue, he brings me into his hidden world. Still not sure why I agreed to come along.

I heard my name.

"No offense to Jeanette," the man I knew only as "Johnson" was speaking, "I'm sure

she's a fine scientist, but why are you sending her with us? Wouldn't she be more useful to you at the Institute?"

Richard glared at Johnson. His forehead wrinkled and his tone got sharper, "I really don't think I need to justify this . . . but to satisfy your curiosity, I'm sending her with you because if you come across any of the scientist's notes, she is best suited to interpret them. Besides that, you will be surprised at how resourceful she is. You will find her assistance necessary at some point, I'm certain."

Richard glanced over at me. I couldn't help but smile at him. It was a tender smile, just like those I gave him years ago. I quickly glanced around the room to see if anyone had seen it. Tristan had. He looked at me as if he understood everything that had ever occurred between Richard and me. It was as obvious to Tristan as it was to me that Richard wanted me to go with Johnson and Kai as I would be well protected if trouble arose.

"So are there any other questions before you suit up and head out?" An irritated tone lingered in Richard's voice.

Johnson noticed and dug a little deeper. "Just one, sir, that phone over there, is it a direct line to Aegis Prime or something?"

"What? This phone?"

Richard picked up the phone. The cord hung in the air.

"This phone is purely for effect. I always wanted a Batphone when I was little. Now, I've got one." Despite the levity of his comment, Richard's face remained worried.

Johnson laughed and the tension in the room abated. "Okay, ladies, let's gear up and go."

Johnson grabbed what seemed to be the usual gear for Kai and himself: a couple of assault rifles, two handguns apiece, extra ammo, intrusion equipment, a mini video camera. While Johnson loaded up, Kai fitted me with some kind of body armor. It was stiff and somewhat restricting, but I was relieved to know that someone was watching out for me.

"Now remember, Jeanette, if there's any trouble stay down and keep covered, we'll handle it. Let us secure the place before you even enter it. You need anything?"

I was a little nervous.

"I've got everything I'll need in my bag. I packed ahead of time for this."

Kai looked at me strangely when I said that. I could tell she was curious about what was in my bag. She would learn soon enough.

Richard turned to Johnson. "Remember to contact us in four hours. By that time we'll be in and out of AMRID. If there's a problem, use the secure channel on your phone link. That goes both ways, so if we run into trouble you'll know."

As the three of us continued to get ready, Richard briefed Tristan and Alise (those seemed like real names) on their part of the plan.

"The three of us are heading over to the Institute in Maryland. We'll be using CDC covers. After we get in, I'll make a show of heading down to one of the labs to work on a

'viral strain' with a colleague of mine. The two of you fade into the background and locate Dr. Boland's office.

"Our plant in USAMRID has indicated that Boland is the scientist who has the embryos. Be careful, Boland's definitely Directorate. We want to keep this low profile, so avoid confrontation. Our goal is to find out the details of the transport of the embryos. Alise, you'll need to hack into Boland's personal files. Our plant went trashing and came up with some possible pass codes. He uploaded them to HERMES, so get them before we go.

"Tristan, you back up Alise. Also, once in Boland's office, see if you can pick up some indication of how they're traveling. Remember, this needs to happen quickly and quietly."

Richard looked up at the entire group. "We'll rendezvous back here in six hours . . . unless something comes up."

ALISE

We turned the corner, and there wasn't a security guard in sight. I looked carefully at the door, checking for electronic security. It was obvious and state-of-the-art. They wanted it clear that this office was off-limits.

"This is not going to be as easy as Vallen thinks." Tristan could tell I was concerned. "This is a military base. We can't just waltz in and gain entrance to a high-security office. Well, Tristan," I turned toward him, "do you have any suggestions?"

"Count down from nine slowly." He positioned himself in front of the lock's number pad. "This will be taxing but it should work."

Tristan held his fingers over the buttons of the number pad and closed his eyes. As I whispered the numbers, he concentrated. At seven, his finger punched out. "Again."

It took five numbers but the door clicked at the last one.

"That was impressive. Nice talent you got there."

I cautiously walked into the room. Once it was clear we were alone, I pulled out my laptop and cables and linked with Boland's work station. "So what do you think about his password? We've got a couple of numbers that look like birth dates, and then a woman's name. We can try either avenue since they're pretty common codes, but I don't know him well enough to guess. God know what happens if we get it wrong."

"I read his file. It looks like Boland does research work for the Book, but his connections don't run very high. He may not even know who he works for. From what I can sense about him, Boland isn't an evil man. I think he owes the NDD, or they might have some other hold on him." He paused, and we both listened intently for any noise down the hall. Nothing. He continued, "He's just not the type for birth dates, and that means we're overlooking something. What else did you get from HERMES?"

"Um," I fumbled through the list, "just a random quote. 'My peace is gone. My heart is heavy.' HERMES says it's by . . ."

"Goethe . . . I know the quote. That's what we're looking for." He began to peruse Boland's bookshelf. "Look, he's got books by Wagner and Nietzsche, so he's well read, but he concentrated mostly on German authors. He was born in the 30s in Germany—might have been indoctrinated into the whole 'superiority of the Aryan race' bullshit." He tilted his head and looked at another selection. "But the quote doesn't fit that mentality. He's changed over the years, regretting the decisions he made." Suddenly he pulled a book from the shelf. "Got it! Try Faust."

"Bingo, we're in!" I smiled without removing my eyes from the screen. "You are good, Tristan, very good."

Moving away from the bookshelf, Tristan went to the desk. He picked up something and I glanced over. It was a lighter. He stood still, lost in thought. I heard him whisper faintly: "Fingers, loud, neon track number."

"Hey, Tristan. You still with me?" I walked over and saw his eyes slowly refocus. I looked down at the desk and noticed something. "Hey, what do we have here?" I picked up a pad and pencil. Using the side of the pencil tip, I carefully shaded the middle of the page. The impression of an e-mail address showed. "I bet this was the last thing Boland wrote. Let's see if

I can find it." I turned back to the laptop. "Lucky for us Boland kept copies of the stuff he sent out."

"You know, Alise, you're a damn fine detective. I hazard a guess that you weren't always involved in the CDC. I mean you really know what you're doing—"

I cut short whatever empathy mumbo-jumbo he might be using. "Stop fishing, Tristan. If you want to learn about me, I can't really stop you. But if you have any respect for me, keep out of my private life, okay?" Guess I didn't need to be so harsh, but he didn't need to know what I carried around in my head.

After a couple of minutes, I found it: a memo.

"This is it," I said excitedly. "Taking kids to the station at 6:00 p.m., rendezvous with sitters at Steven's. See you in two days." I saved the file to the laptop. "'Station' . . . does that mean bus or train? Also, who the hell is this Steven? If the rest of the message is so cryptic, why is 'Steven's' not?"

"Maybe 'Steven's' is blatant because there is no other way to put it," Tristan suggested. "Call the train station and find out if they have any places called 'Steven's' nearby."

"How do you know for sure it's the train station?" I asked, but I already knew.

"Trust me. It's the train station, and we don't have much time. Let's go."

We cleaned up any trace of our presence and headed for the exit. Just as Tristan reached the door, he paused. He whispered, "Bad guy at the door" and ducked back.

The door opened to reveal a huge security guard, blocking the light from the hall.

"What the hell are you doing in here?"

Before he could move, I struck. As my open hand impacted on the guard's face, I cut loose with the juice, electricity sparking from my palm. The guard dropped like a sack of potatoes . . . a big sack of potatoes. Guess he wasn't used to those kind of shocks. Tristan wasn't either. After a hard stare, he refused to look me in the eyes. Can't blame him; the tech gives me the willies sometimes, too.

"Don't ask any questions," I warned. "Let's just get Vallen before the gorilla wakes up."

"No arguments from me." He followed, staring back at the unconscious guard.

I hurried down the corridor and called Vallen via the link. "Richard, I was just notified that we have . . . um, a situation back home that needs our immediate attention."

KAI

Johnson and I moved together like a well-oiled machine. It was difficult to focus on him through the green glare of the night vision goggles, but sound was enough to guide me. The smell hit as soon as we entered the warehouse, and my feet kept sticking to the floor. I really didn't want to know what I was sticking to; it reeked as if it had died a while ago. Johnson's whisper in my hands-free broke the silence.

"Stay tight, Kai. I've got a bad feeling about this."

As long as I've known Johnson, he'd never based anything on intuition. Got me nervous. "Hold up a minute. Before we go any further, tell me what's wrong." He moved up so close I could feel his body warmth.

"The last run I was on," he started reluctantly, "the last time I was part of a cell, we were doing a warehouse job, and things went wrong. We lost two good agents: one dead, the other scared into catatonia. There are too many similarities here, and I'm replaying the scenario in my head. I don't want you to get hurt," he looked at me and then back toward the end of the hall, ". . . either of us for that matter. And we've got to babysit the newbie. Real uncomfortable with this."

"It'll be okay," I reassured him, trying to focus on the mission at hand. "We'll move together down the hallway, then to the right. Blueprints showed the power box about ten feet from the corner. Keep close—I'll hit the power, you watch the six."

We secured the building with no problems. Lights showed nothing alive was left here. Broken glass vats spilled some kind of greenish goo on the floor. As I walked I could hear the glass crunch, followed by the squishy sound of my boots in the slime. Johnson spoke into his hands-free.

"Jeanette, we are secure here. You can move in, copy?"

"I read you. What equipment?"

"You're going to need some gear to collect samples. We've got some weird stuff here." I started looking around as Jeanette made her way inside. There was an overturned desk riddled with bullet holes. I found remnants of what might be blood on the floor, and pointed it out for Jeanette.

"Johnson, look," I pointed to the ceiling. "There's a camera. That means there's monitoring equipment somewhere around here."

"Jeanette, you continue to grab samples of whatever you can. Take a look through the desk, too, and see if you can find something useful."

After searching for a few minutes, Johnson found a secret panel leading to a hidden office. I spent some time fiddling with the equipment in the monitoring area and called out when finally it worked. "Hey, guys, I got some feed from the day of the incident."

Jeanette joined me in the office, waving some disks she found in the desk. He returned to the main portion of the warehouse to keep an eye on things. I hit playback.

"Okay, this must be the scientist, but who's he's talking to? He's huge . . . or maybe the scientist is a midget." The video went on for a minute or two, then fritzed out for a couple of seconds. When it came back, the desk was turned over and there were muzzle flashes at the edge of the screen.

"What's going on?" I tried to piece the events together. "The really tall guy's kicking butt, and he's taking a lot of bullets without going down. It looks like the scientist was working with someone, and a strike team of some kind showed up at the wrong time. Maybe they wanted what the scientist had."

Jeanette stared at the screen, obviously viewing the scene with inexperienced eyes. "What's that thing that guy has on his arm? It looks like some kind of claw." I froze the frame.

"Oh, shit, that's a Saurian plasma claw. I've seen a couple of those in my day." I turned toward the novice beside me. "This is bad, Jeanette. Read bad."

"Kai, problem," Johnson's voice over the hand-free startled me. Suddenly the power shut down.

"What's going on, Kai? Why did the power go off?" The nervousness in Jeanette's voice wasn't making the situation any easier. I pulled her down to the floor with me and whispered.

"Be silent and move only when I say. We are going to head for the door, so put these on." I handed her a spare set of night vision goggles and hoped she wouldn't freak out on me. Adrenalin had kicked in and my heart was pounding loudly. For some reason, I couldn't stop thinking about Johnson. I didn't know if he was down, but I couldn't risk breaking radio silence until I knew what was going on. Moving across the floor like a spider, I silently edged my way toward the door of the office. Silhouetted against the window across the warehouse, I could see someone walking. It wasn't Johnson—wasn't the way he moved. Then it dawned on me how tall the shadow was. My mouth dried up. If I hadn't just watched this guy on the video take out at least three people with no problem, I would've been a lot more confident. Slowly, I reached back and motioned for Jeanette to follow.

I maneuvered out the door and shot a smoke grenade across the room to serve as a distraction. Jeanette and I jumped up simultaneously and bolted for the entry hall. We reached the exit in seconds. I looked back to see Johnson rounding the corner. I guess he liked my distraction. "Go, go, go! Open the door!" Johnson yelled, pushing past Jeanette.

"I'm trying, but it's stuck!" Her voice was tinged with panic. "It's jammed or something. Help me!" Jeanette could see the tall man at the end of the hall now, and she started to whimper. The three of us shoved the doublewide doors with desperate strength. Maddeningly, it held. Jeanette whispered harshly and it suddenly gave way. We spilled out of the building. I ran as fast as I could, pushed Jeanette into the back of the van, and jumped in. Johnson started the vehicle and screamed out of the parking lot.

"That's it, no more warehouses ever. Every time I set foot in one of those places, things go wrong." Johnson's hands were white on the

steering wheel. "We lost everything because that guy showed up. I mean, it was one guy, what the hell were we running for? Might have been pretty useful to interrogate him." Johnson sounded really annoyed. Jeanette was clearly too shaken up to talk much. I had to admit, though, for someone who had just had the crap scared out of her, she was keeping it together pretty well.

"Johnson, we definitely didn't want to try to detain that guy. He was on the video, and we watched him take out at least two regular combat guys and maybe a MIB. He could even have been one of those superhuman Atlanteans I heard some eggheads talk about at the Ranch."

"You've got to be kidding me!" Johnson's eyes seemed to pop out of his head. "We have the Book, MIBs, and an Atlantean all vying for the embryos? Oh, yeah, this is going to be fun." He pounded the steering wheel with one hand. "Okay, get on the horn and let Vallen know what's going down."

I moved over to Jeanette to check on her. "Hey there, how you holding up?"

"I'm okay, and there's something I need to explain, but I just need a little time. Oh, and by the way, all the samples I took and the disks I grabbed are in my bag." She glanced up at Johnson. "You see, I'm not so useless after all." There was resentment in her voice.

"Look, Jeanette, I'm sorry I offended you before. You did real well in there and I shouldn't have underestimated you." Johnson actually sounded sincere.

Jeanette looked at me and I smiled, head butting her lightly. That and Johnson's praise seemed to settle her. She was a proven member of the team now.

TRISTAN

"We'll see you soon." Vallen put away the phone link.

"We will meet Johnson's team further down the line. They apparently ran into a few problems, but everyone's all right."

I could tell Vallen was concerned about Jeanette.

"So, what's the story between you and Jeanette? It's pretty obvious that there is something special between you two."

Vallen hesitated. He wasn't going to open up to a stranger. I left him little choice, brushing my fingers against the skin of his hand.

"I see you and her dancing, the cross you wear, she gave that to you, but you're not religious. You love her."

I couldn't figure out why I was prying into Vallen's personal life. This was not the way I really wanted to learn more about him. It's so hard to resist, though. Whether or not people are willing, I learn whatever I want about them. My voyeuristic tendencies disgust me . . . still I can't help myself. I like to pretend I'm trying to help people open up. Who am I trying to kid?

Vallen reached into his shirt and pulled out a well hidden chain with a cross dangling

from the end. He just held it in his hand. Clearly a closed individual, but he didn't seem angry at my intrusion into his psyche. I started to back off.

"I'm sorry. I should not have done that, Richard. Your life is private and I have no place there. I can't explain why, and don't take this the wrong way, but I feel closer to you than the others. I thought perhaps you might want a friend. Unfortunately, I'm not so good at winning friends without reading them first."

Vallen actually responded. "It's been a long time since I've had a friend. I lost everyone I care about because of what we do. It might be nice to have someone I could talk to. Thanks, Tristan." His voice was a little shaky. It is not the easiest thing for a man to admit that he could use a friend, much less admit it to another man.

Alise walked up carrying three train tickets.

"Dr. Boland is not very clever. First he keeps his secret e-mails, then books the ticket under his own name. Anyway, the train he's traveling on is about to leave, so if we're going to make it, we gotta go now."

On the train I thought about Alise's "power." She was acting as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. I wished she were as receptive to having a confidant as Vallen. I was curious how she had been able to take down that guard the way that she had.

Vallen interrupted before I got to ask.

"Here's the situation. Johnson's team is still investigating down there, but they got some vital information for us. It turns out we not only have to worry about encountering NDD, but there may be both MiBs and an Atlantean involved. We don't want to mess with any of them without Kai and Johnson around, so for now we just want to locate Boland on the train. In the event that he is alone, we grab him. If he's traveling with anyone, we lay low until the others arrive. We've got a long train ride to deal with the situation, so let's not be hasty and start making mistakes."

Vallen was back in complete control, the ideal team leader.

It was my job to locate Dr. Boland. I walked through the corridors of the train, clutching the lighter I had found in his office. After about an hour of searching, I finally picked up on something. I rested my hand on the door of the compartment. There was a feeling of discomfort on the other side, and my hand holding the lighter began to tingle.

"This is it."

"Is there anyone in there with him?" Alise was getting anxious.

"I sense no one else with him. I'll go in first. I've gotten to know him a little and think this will work best."

I could tell Alise was not fond of the idea. I would have liked to believe that she was concerned because she actually cared for me, but my guess is that she just didn't want me to screw things up.

I opened the door and four heads turned to see the intruder—me. There was Boland, sitting with three big, bulky guys, all wearing black suits, black shades, and earphone radios. Even in the room with them, I felt the presence of only one person. That really freaked me out.

"I'm sorry, I must have the wrong compartment. Um, Linda Freeman isn't traveling in this box, is she?"

I smiled stupidly. The only name I could think of was my high school girlfriend.

The three men just stared coldly at me. It was Boland who answered my question, in a pronounced German accent, just like my grandfather.

"No, no, you have the wrong place, but if I see her I'll let her know you stopped by, Mr. . . . ?"

His voice trailed off as one of the Men in Black moved toward me and shut the door in my face.

I walked slowly down the hallway to where Alise and Vallen were waiting. Didn't need to be psychic to tell I was shaken.

"So, was Boland bigger than you imagined?" Alise was half joking, but she knew things were not good.

"Okay, we have a problem. When I opened the door to Boland's cabin, I sensed he was the only person there. But . . . well . . . there were three big guys in suits sitting with him, and they were not happy to see me. Besides that, they were making Boland real uncomfortable."

Vallen took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. It was obvious that he was feeling overwhelmed again.

"So what do you think they were?"

"I don't know. I know we fight aliens, or at least I've heard that. Up 'til now I've never even seen one, though. I mean, these guys looked just like us. Specifically, they looked like me. Not facial features, but build and heritage. But they couldn't have been human. They had no presence."

"Is it possible that for some reason or another you just couldn't sense them, but they were human?" When Vallen asked, I knew he was just hoping that I had made some kind of mistake.

"I've been wrong about lots of things in my life, but everyone I've ever met has had a certain feel, a presence. I'm telling you, these guys didn't."

"Okay, the best we can do is wait for Johnson's team. Kai will probably be able to tell us what we're dealing with. Until then, let's keep a close eye on Boland's compartment. None of them go anywhere without us knowing about it. Got it?"

Vallen was tired, but he always seemed to have a solution. Still, seemed as if we were in for a long, dangerous train ride.

KAI

While I briefed Johnson on what we had seen on the video, we pulled into a cemetery. "Um, Jeanette? Why did you want to go here?" Johnson was trying to keep his voice calm. "I mean, this is a nice place to sightsee, but we definitely don't have time for this right now!"

Jeanette sighed. "Look, Johnson, you're going to have to trust that I know what I'm doing." She sounded like her patience was waning. "I can find out if the scientist is still alive, and I can tell us generally where he is."

"I don't understand, Jeanette. What aren't you telling us?" Johnson started to speak. "Look," I cut him off, glaring at Johnson, "a good team sticks together and tells each other what's going on. You are part of the team, true, but you've got to come clean with us."

"I already told you what I'm doing here. I'm meeting someone who can give me the information about . . ."

"You have a contact you meet in a graveyard?" Johnson interrupted.

"Yes, in a manner of speaking, but it will take some time for her to show up," Jeanette hesitated. "Like about three hours. Just don't interfere when I'm talking to her, and trust me!" Obviously unhappy, Johnson shifted in his seat. We were both pretty nervous, but I could tell he would go along, hoping that Jeanette wasn't crazy. She was purposefully being vague, and neither of us liked that. Johnson did unsnap the strap on his holster for a quick draw, just in case. Shaking her head over his precaution, Jeanette jumped out of the van and turned back to us. "It will go faster if you help me."

It was pretty cold, trudging around in the middle of a cemetery. Jeanette instructed us to draw a pentagram in the dirt around some graves. This was pretty creepy, like out of a horror movie or something. I watched as Jeanette strategically placed candles on the points of the pentagram. The flames flickered in the breeze. Then she stood in the middle of it all and sprinkled strange powder on the ground around her while chanting. Johnson and I slowly backed away from her to sit on some tombstones and stare as Jeanette began her strange ritual. She sat cross-legged in the middle of the pentagram and waved her arms about as she half-spoke, half-sang in what sounded a lot like French. A tingle ran up my back as I was reminded of the old spiritual dances and prayers my mother used to perform, back when we lived on the reservation. Time dragged and I might have dozed.

Sudenly, the smoke from the candle's flames started to stir and form an image of an elderly woman in some kind of Caribbean garb. I gasped involuntarily as her face appeared, wrinkled and rounded. Johnson and I watched the smoke play games with the proportions. I realized that I was witnessing a spirit. I'd seen some wild stuff, but never anything like this. A profound sadness swept over me—for some reason, now I truly regretted ignoring my people's folklore and religions.

The smoke seemed to dance around Jeanette as she spoke to it. Finally it swirled around her head and disappeared. In the spirit's wake was a silence so deep that it was disturbing. After an eternity, the stillness was broken by the spirit's return. Jeanette lifted her hands into the air and smiled as the smoke twirled through her open fingers and circled her head. She spoke very tenderly into the air, as if ending a conversation with a dear friend, closed her hands around the smoke, and the spirit was gone.

"Well," Johnson said, breaking the silence. "That was interesting. Did you find out anything?" I glared at Johnson before turning to Jeanette.

"That was amazing! I've never seen weirdass crap used for good. Maybe," I asked in a quieter tone, "when we have more time you can explain what you were actually doing?"

"I summoned the spirit of my grandmother Abelyne. She and I share a strong bond." Jeanette sounded defensive. "She watches over me and guides me."

"Did . . . were you talking to her at the warehouse?"

"Yes, I thought we almost had it. Grandmother gave us the extra luck we needed." Jeanette was proud. "She also found the scientist, who is alive and relatively close by. He's in hiding, though, and won't come out until he feels it is safe to do so. Abelyne feels he is waiting for someone to bring him to safety." Johnson began to gather up the stuff.

"Okay, thanks, Jeanette. That was fascinating, but now we have to get back to reality and find out what's going on with Vallen's team." He turned his back on us and headed back to the van. We watched, stunned.

"Johnson, wait up!" I yelled, catching up to his retreating form. "What's wrong with you? Why can't see the potential in Jeanette's ability. Maybe I'm biased because I've had more exposure to this sort of thing, with my mom's gift for spirit talking and all, but that's no reason you should just dismiss everything we both witnessed!" Johnson kept walking. "Just because you can't do it, you get all jealous and can't believe it's a valid way to gather information!"

In response, the sky rumbled and it began to rain. In silence, we continued to march out of the cemetery. Jeanette caught up with me and touched my shoulder gently.

"Kai, thanks for understanding me."

Johnson stopped and spun around.

"Look, if you two Girl Scouts want to hang out here all day, calling up dead grandmothers and telling ghost stories, you can be my guests! But," he held up his hand, "as I remember it, our prime objective was to get the embryos. What Jeanette did was useful as far as the information we need goes, but right now we need to get back to Vallen and take care of business. I don't want any more attitude from you, Jeanette. And Kai," turning to me, "never make rash judgments about how you think I feel."

Johnson turned back to Jeanette, leaving me blushing and somewhat angry. "I do appreciate your abilities, Jeanette, but we are hours late for our rendezvous and we have no more time for playing around. I am cold, wet, and hungry, and we haven't got the time now to stop for food. That pisses me off. We have to

call in a helo pick-up to get us to wherever the rest of the team is. So," he took a deep breath, "let's go, and you can tell us what your grandmother found out in the van."

BOLLAND

"So, are the three of you brothers? You look much alike."

I watched for their reaction, but there was none. I couldn't see the glare that I knew they were giving me from behind their shades. I didn't turn my head to look at the one sitting next me. He was just like the two across from me. There was little human about them, except their appearance.

"So, they did not see fit to provide you with a sense of humor in the gene vats, eh?"

The one directly across from me (no names were exchanged so I call him Hans) spoke.

"We are not clones, but you know that. Dr. Boland, this will be a much more pleasant trip if you just remain quiet."

Several people (that I know of) had died trying to get their hands on the embryos I was carrying, and these creatures came from such embryos. I couldn't fathom their intentions, but I didn't think the welfare of the human race figured into them. They only disguised themselves to look like us for easy infiltration.

It all reminded me of the experiments in Germany during World War II. According to the extensive files provided by the Directorate, the goal was the creation of die Übermenschen, the super soldiers. In their human disguises, the three "men" sharing the cabin with me epitomized the goal of those projects. They were perfect warriors. Perhaps that's what the U.S. military was intending, at least the part of the military that the Directorate owned. There was a time when I too would have been impressed by their skills and capacities. But I was all too aware that they were not human. Their interest in killing humans and ensuring the survival of the embryos had nothing to do with loyalty or nationalism or any of the other human beliefs that motivated my colleagues in the Directorate, or those who created the Reich for that matter.

I was sure it all has to do with some hidden agenda that the Directorate was too blind to see. It was unfortunate that I no longer wanted anything to do with the whole situation, as I was powerless to do anything about it. The best I could hope was that the plan went without a hitch and I could get as far away from these things as possible.

I fumbled around for my lighter, my lucky lighter, but I couldn't find it anywhere.

"Boland, what are you doing?"

I was surprised to hear a voice. He must have noticed me getting twitchy from lack of nicotine.

"In the rush to leave my office, it would appear that I left my lighter. That is troubling to me. I need a cigarette to calm my nerves."

I realized as I spoke that they would never understand the concept of a lucky lighter. They just stared at me blankly, offering nothing to the conversation. I had to stop the stares, the craving got stronger.

"Look, come with me if you must, but I need to smoke. I do not have my lighter, so we must go to the dining car to get matches. While we are there we can eat. That will get us away from this stuffy compartment for a time."

I stood up, believing that I had convinced them. Who was I kidding?

"Sit down, Boland, this is not a vacation. You are going nowhere."

If I was three times bigger and 40 years younger, I would have taught the jerk a lesson. As it was, talking was my only option.

"You three may not need to eat or sleep or suffer from any addictions, and life may be grand on your home planet. But right now you are on Earth and your survival depends on the cooperation of humans. So, you should get used to the fact that we eat, drink too much, and go to the bathroom. Now, I am going to have a smoke, and then I am going to eat. If you three think differently, go ahead and try to stop me. But I warn you, if you do I will carry on and draw attention to the three brutes accosting a little old man. So . . . if you want this to go smoothly, let me walk out this door."

With that, Hans stood up. It hurt my neck to stare up at him. I was so scared I actually started shaking.

"Okay, old man, I'm going with you."

"Suit yourself, Hans. Would you care for a cigarette?"

ALISE

We were in car at the end of the train. Johnson's team had boarded at the last stop and Vallen had briefed them. Good thing Kai had BLUE FLY contacts. Otherwise, they never would have made it in time. Johnson flashed his DEA badge and used some story about a drug sting. Over the course of several miles, we quietly cleared everyone out of the car. As we neared the Steven's Point station, we heard movement in the compartment. When the old man and his "keepers" left their compartment, we were ready. Or so I thought.

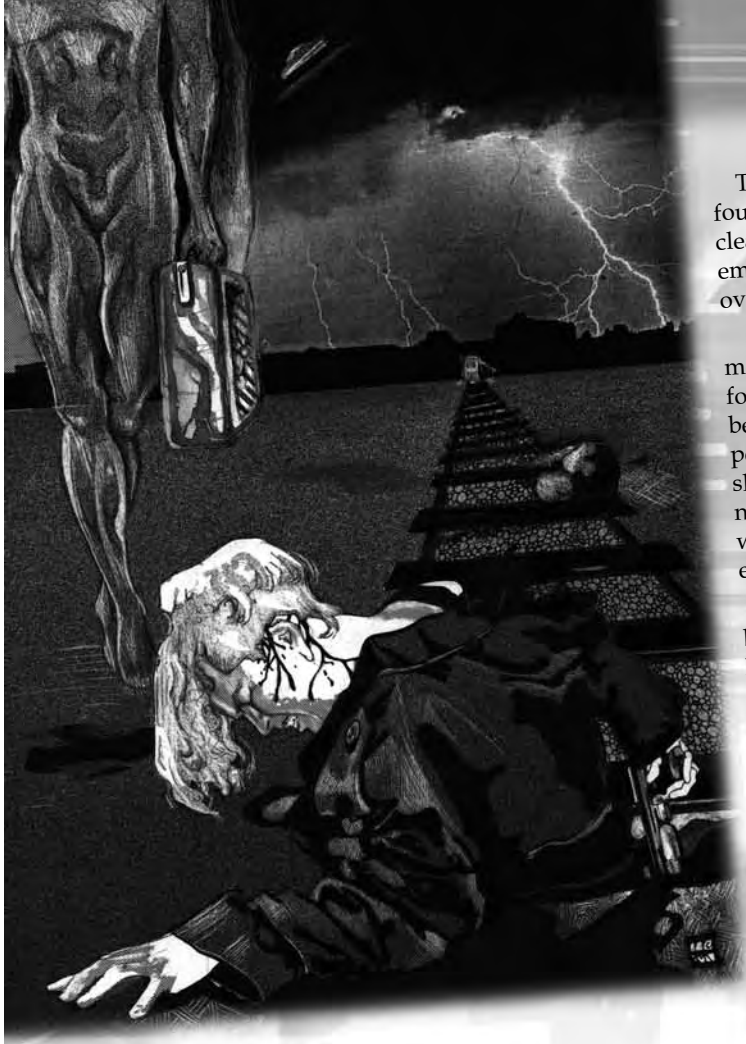
It all went so fast that it's tough to piece together now. I was standing in the doorway of one of the compartments toward the end of the train. Boland and one of the bruisers took a few steps toward the front of the train, passing the adjacent compartment that held Tristan and Kai. Tristan grabbed Boland under the arms, pulling him out of harm's way. Kai bounced up behind the man-mountain and plugged him twice in the head with a silenced pistol. That took him down—fast. Kai didn't even flinch when the blood splattered in her face. Somehow the other two MiBs knew there was trouble because they came bounding out, pulling on and charging up their plasma claws.

"Kai! Look out!" Johnson's voice rang out like a shot. He moved fast and slammed the rearmost brute back into their compartment. He grabbed the other one, using all his strength simply to spin him around. Kai turned and aimed high, another head shot. Johnson ducked just as she fired. The timing was so beautiful, it seemed rehearsed. That MiB also went down—hard.

Meanwhile, the third one grabbed the embryos and rushed toward the end of the train—my end. Jeanette stepped in front of me for some crazy reason and pointed a gun at him. Then he was on her, slashing her across the chest with his glove. She went down immediately.

Before I knew what I was doing I had wrapped my arms around the MiB's legs. It was just me and the bruiser at the back of the train. He dragged both of us to the rear door. I knew exactly what he was going to do—he was going to jump off the train. After everything we had been through, I just couldn't let him get away. From behind I could hear Johnson yell, "Alise, let go!"

It was too late. The MiB lept and I clung to him. It wasn't bad enough that I had just tackled an alien. Now I was hurtling off a train going about 40 miles an hour. Oh, my God, what was I thinking? We hit the ground and flipped one over the other. He took the brunt of the initial landing, but I felt my ribs crack. The sound was bad and so was the pain. My chest heaved and my mouth filled with blood. It was hard to breathe. My left shoulder felt wrong, and I knew I must have dislocated it. Hell, I couldn't believe I was still conscious.



The MiB didn't seem so bad off. He looked beyond me at the train that was moving quickly away, then focused his attention on me. I knew he would wreck me in close combat. My adrenaline pumped, and the pain receded a bit. I pulled my gun at the same time he leapt, plasma claw forward. The bullet struck first and by pure chance, it hit him in the head. He went down. I kept firing, unloading the pistol into him until his head was just a gray mash—probably excessive, but I was really pissed. I sat there for a few minutes with my gun smoking. I waited for something to happen—shimmering light, green ooze, something. The dead guy still looked human. Maybe I've just seen too many movies.

The pain returned. I stifled a breath and fought to stay conscious. When my vision cleared, I dragged myself over to the embryos. They were intact. Finally, it was over.

A silverish boot appeared in front of me. I craned my neck forever before I found the top of the guy—turned out to be a girl. She appeared to be the most perfect person I'd ever seen. She wore a skin-tight silver bodysuit that concealed nothing. Long blond hair waved in the wind as she reached down and took the embryos from me.

I hissed, "I don't know who you are, but you're not taking those." It was really bizarre—I'd never met this woman in my life but I felt she knew me.

She smiled and I was oddly happy. "I know you've gone through a lot to obtain these, but you and Aegis aren't ready for this information." His voice was music. "Don't worry, Alise, you'll get another chance. For now, be happy that you're still alive. You and your group did well tracking down and securing these embryos. Good luck healing, Alise. I know you'll be fine." She smiled, showing perfect white teeth. "You know, there's a little of me in you."

I watched her float up to the craft overhead and my brief happy buzz was replaced with disgust and disappointment. I wanted to know how she knew me and what she meant about tracking down the embryos. Where did she get off flying in and taking our hard-fought gains? Just who the hell were we working for? As usual for Aegis, every job is double-cross and backstab. She was right about one thing, though. I was lucky to be alive. I just hoped everyone else was too.

Next time we'll be ready for her.

Next time we'll win.

Chap

On the surface, the world looks very much like the one outside your bedroom window. The same people are walking the same dirty streets, the same animals rummage through the same garbage, and the same mindless drivel is shown on the same television stations. But sometimes that world just doesn't seem right. Why do certain figures appear out of nowhere and become famous overnight? Why do so many people disappear each year? What is the government really paying for when it shells out $75 for a screwdriver? Why is it that any answer unearthed always leads to another question? Sometimes you cannot see what defines your world. This is the nature of conspiracies. This is the nature of *Conspiracy X*.

In a typical *Conspiracy X* game, the players assume the roles of operatives of Aegis, a secret organization at work within the United States government. Aegis has been aware of an extraterrestrial presence on Earth for more than forty years, and has had an in-depth understanding of the supernatural for the last twenty. Aegis' self-appointed duty is to monitor alien and supernatural activities and counter those it deems unacceptable.

But Aegis is not the only conspiracy in existence. The National Defense Directorate, labeled the Black Book by Aegis conspirators, is embedded within the American military-industrial complex and has extensive dealings with extraterrestrial agents. Indeed, the NDD has entered into several high-level treaties with the invaders. To Aegis agents, the NDD represents humankind at its most opportunistic and morally compromised.

Once part of the same organization, Aegis and the NDD now wage a secret war of covert operations, abductions, and human experimentation behind a facade of lies and disinformation. As part of Aegis, you are authorized to employ any means in your fight against the NDD and its inhuman allies. The Aegis arsenal combines high-tech surveillance equipment and state-of-the-art weapons with psychic warfare, supernatural rituals, and stolen alien technology. Lies, deception, cover-ups, sacrifice and force – even terminal force – are part of the job.

The conflict has raged for nearly fifty years, and the stakes are high. Humanity's existence on Earth as master or pawn – indeed humankind's entire existence – depends on your vigilance and success.

ter One

Indoctrination

Disclaimer

The world of Conspiracy X is based on historic and contemporary events, persons, and groups. The secret of a good Conspiracy X campaign is weaving "real" events as seamlessly as possible into the story line so that the players cannot be sure what is true and what is deception. Heightened paranoia is central to the experience.

When this book, or any other Conspiracy X publication, uses names and details taken from history or contemporary affairs, all such references are fictional or satirical. Conspiracy X is intended solely as a game and not as a source of the "truth." Nothing in this book is intended to degrade or impugn these people or groups, nor does this book purport to reveal true secretive information about them. In fact, Eden Studios and the authors would like to publicly disclaim any "inside" knowledge and assure any MiBs and Aegis operatives out there that there is no reason to look into the matter any further. Honest!

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One: Indoctrination introduces the game and setting.

Chapter Two: Personnel details how to create Aegis operatives. This chapter contains full lists of operative professions, favors they can call in known as "Pulling Strings," special advantages and disadvantages, and skills.

Chapter Three: Ops Center discusses the formation of the characters' secret headquarters and the equipment they may access readily. This second stage of character creation is done by the players as a group and establishes their "cell." Pooling their resources, they establish a base of operations from which they can coordinate missions for Aegis.

Chapter Four: Tradecraft introduces the **Unisystem** as the main rules mechanics for the *Conspiracy X* game. This includes full combat rules, martial arts, and car chases, covering nearly every eventuality that the operatives may face in the course of their missions.

Chapter Five: Paranormal introduces Extra Sensory Perception (ESP), the basic psychic powers available to all operatives, and touches upon Rituals and other paranormal abilities that Aegis may exploit. Paranormal phenomena frequently investigated by Aegis are also covered.

Chapter Six: Classified provides a number of documents containing basic knowledge held by Aegis. This chapter is intended for the Chronicler's eyes only initially, until she bestows this information upon the agents. Those who wish to play *Conspiracy X* and experience the surprise of discovering the secrets of the conspiracies for themselves should not read this chapter, as it provides an overview of the aliens and their technology, as well as Aegis' alien technology and a brief history of Aegis itself.

The Appendix. Options are provided for playing *Conspiracy X* without dice, as well as conversion rules from the original *Conspiracy X* game mechanics.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The first four chapters are directed at both player and Chronicler. They provide commonly known background on the *Conspiracy X* world (at least commonly known by Aegis agents) and all of the rules necessary to play the game. Chroniclers may want their players to start completely ignorant of the "truth" behind the "lies" (a perfectly valid beginning to any conspiracy game); nothing in these chapters "gives" too much away.

Chapters Five: Paranormal and **Chapter Six: Classified** go into more secretive stuff. A good deal is revealed in these chapters, but some of it is false or misleading (as the Chronicler determines). Chroniclers who want to keep a tight lid on conspiratorial information should restrict players from reading these chapters.

To keep the "Truth," as well as the full details and rules for the paranormal and alien races, completely out of sight of the players, separate sourcebooks have been created. The first two books, *The Extraterrestrial Sourcebook* and *The Paranormal Sourcebook*, detail all the alien motivations and plans, as well as rules for powerful psychics, magical rituals, and corrupted monsters. This information is to be parceled out by Chroniclers as the campaign progresses, if at all. Hints of the "Truth" are covered in the later chapters of this book, as are sample alien characters and paranormal powers, so that Chroniclers can run fully realized games without purchasing the other books. The details in this book, however, only touch the surface of the lies, cover-ups, and supernatural horrors that await the unsuspecting agent.

The strength of the *Conspiracy X* world is its grounding in modern 21st-century events, history, conspiracy theory, people, places, and things. Chroniclers need look no further than the grocery store tabloids for source material. Alien abductions, ghost stories, supernatural monsters, even Elvis sightings are all part and parcel of *Conspiracy X* stories.

CONSPIRACY X V2.0

With three revised printings, the original *Conspiracy X* roleplaying game was a huge hit during the years after its release. The response was truly overwhelming. This latest incarnation of *Conspiracy X* contains all the great background and stories from the original version, but has been updated for use with the **Unisystem** game engine. So why a new version?

With the publication of *C .J. Carella's WitchCraft*, and the subsequent **Unisystem** games *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*, *Armageddon*, *Terra Primate* and the amazing *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* RPG's, *Conspiracy X* was the only original Eden RPG product not compatible with the others. By converting *Conspiracy X* to the **Unisystem,** the range of such games are enhanced. Everything that was possible in the original system is possible now. Better yet, the wide range of existing **Unisystem** material adds even more possibilities.

CONVENTIONS

TEXT CONVENTIONS

This book has different graphic features that identify the types of information presented. This text is standard text, and it is used for general explanations.

This style is used for examples that illustrate specific rules or situations. Novice Chroniclers, those who run Conspiracy X games, can look to these examples for guides on how to play.

Certain text is set off from the standard text in this manner. This is sidebar text and it contains additional, but tangential, information or supplemental charts and tables.

Other text is set apart in this way. It details Supporting Cast or Adversaries who may be used at the Chronicler's discretion.

DICE NOTATIONS

Dice are used when the outcome of an action in the *Conspiracy X* game is in doubt. The **Unisystem** relies on four different kinds: ten-sided, eight-sided, six-sided, and four-sided. Such dice can be found in any good hobby or gaming store, and in many comic books stores. Dice are denoted by placing a "D" in front of their numerical value. Thus, a D4 indicates a four-sided die; a D8 an eight-sided die.

Ten-sided dice (D10): Used for Task/Test resolution and certain weapon damage, D10s are the most commonly used dice. Entire game sessions can come and go without using any dice other than the D10s. They can be replaced in a very rough sense by using two six-sided dice and subtracting two from the roll (treat a result of "0" as a "1").

Eight- and four-sided dice (D8s and D4s): In the **Unisystem**, these dice are used only to determine damage.

Six-sided dice (D6s): These are the most common dice available, easily "borrowed" from any number of easily obtained board games. If D10s are not readily available, D6s can be used as replacements.

Multipliers are expressed after the dice notation. For example, D10 x 4 means roll one ten-sided die and multiply the result by four. This generates a number between four and 40.

A number in parentheses after, or in the middle of, the notation is the average roll. This number is provided for those who want to avoid dice rolling and just want the result. So the notation D6 x 4(12) means that players who want to skip rolling should use the value 12. Some notations cannot provide set numbers because their results depend on variable factors. For example, D8(4) x Strength is used because the Strength value to be plugged into that notation will vary depending on who is acting.

GENDER

Every roleplaying game faces a decision about third-person pronouns and possessives. While the male reference (he, him, his) is customarily used for both male and female, there is no question that it is not entirely inclusive. On the other hand, the "he or she" structure is clumsy and unattractive. In an effort to "split the difference," this book uses male designations for even chapters and female designations for odd chapters.

MEASUREMENTS

This book primarily uses U.S. measurements (feet, yards, miles, pounds, etc.). Should metric equivalents be needed, the following rough conversions can be used: miles can be multiplied by 1.5 to get kilometers (instead of 1.609), meters can be treated the same as yards (instead of 1.094 yards), pounds can be halved to get kilograms (instead of multiplied by 0.4536), and so on. If a Chronicler feels that more precision is necessary, she should take the U.S. measurements provided and apply more exact formulas.

ROLEPLAYING

This book contains a roleplaying game, its setting, and its rules. So what is a roleplaying game? Simply put, it is a combination of board game, strategy game, and improvisational theater. It is a more mature version of the games of "let's pretend" that we all played as children. The rules are meant to avoid the old disputes about exactly what happened ("I shot you! You're dead!" "Am not!" "Are so!"). To enforce the rules and provide a coherent setting, one of the participants assumes the role of

Chronicler (known as Director, Game Master, or Referee in other contexts). The rest of the players take on roles in a story jointly created between the players and the Chronicler.

Roleplaying games have been around for more than two decades. They run the gamut from mindless combat scenarios to nearly ruleless, story-driven acting exercises. The **Unisystem**, the game rules of *Conspiracy X*, concentrates on the following elements.

Acting: Each participant in a roleplaying game is acting out the part of a Cast Member, a fictional character. The player controls the actions of the Cast Member, which are limited only by the rules, the character's abilities and limitations, and the player's imagination. The character may be as similar or different from the player as desired. Some players prefer to take on the roles of heroic versions of themselves, while others want to "be in the shoes" of completely different people. Many elements of improvisational theater can be found in roleplaying. The player has to come up with the "lines" spoken by her character as the storyline develops.

The Chronicler delivers the utterances and determines the actions of those the Cast Members meet in the setting. These folks are divided between Supporting Cast Members (friends, allies, contacts, bystanders) and Adversaries (the bad guys). Depending on the storyline, the same character could move back and forth between the two non-Cast Member groups, or even join the Cast Member ranks (assuming a player wishes to take over).

Storytelling: During a game, the Chronicler and the players create a story, shaped by the actions of the Cast Members and the conflicts and situations provided by the Chronicler. A story is being experienced at the same time it is being written. Because this tale has a number of authors, however, the creators do not know exactly how it will end. Each character's actions have an impact on the result, as do the conflicts and drama injected into the story by the Chronicler.

Uncertainty: The uncertainty of not knowing the end of the story is enhanced in many games by the use of dice, cards, and other randomizing elements. This gives roleplaying an aspect similar to sporting events and games of chance – what will the outcome be? This provides an excitement similar to the feeling that many experience when watching a football game or a boxing match. The skills of the participants play a big role in what the results will be, but the final outcome remains uncertain until it is over. Some gamers prefer to reduce or even eliminate randomness altogether, letting the needs of the story dictate the outcome. The **Unisystem** is designed to please both those who like the chance element and those who wish to minimize it or eliminate it outright.

Imagination and Creativity: Instead of being a passive form of entertainment, such as watching television or reading a book, roleplaying exercises the players' imagination and creativity. Each shares the responsibility of producing a good and entertaining experience. Each brings humor, drama, and suspense to the game. In roleplaying, the goal is not to win, but simply to have fun and help others have fun.

RUNNING THE GAME

Roleplaying games unfold through conversation – a give and take between the Chronicler and the players. The Chronicler describes a situation and then asks the players what their Cast Members are doing. Dialogue is spoken out loud and proceeds in real time. A typical descriptive set-up might go as follows.

Chronicler: *You scramble through the woods, edging ever closer to the glow coming over the ridge. The saucer must have come down in this vicinity – a subtle but clearly artificial smell permeates the area and the air seems charged with electricity. What are your plans?*

In this example, three Cast Members, each controlled by a separate player, are near a saucer's crash site. Each character has a chance to do something, although the Cell leader has the most choices – he could order them to do various things such as check the perimeter, approach with guns drawn, try to sense psychic activity, or anything else. The other Cast Members could talk to the leader or look around for anything suspicious, for example.

After the Chronicler presents a situation, he asks *"What do you do?"* Now, it is the Cast Members' turn to start contributing to the story. This back and forth continues as the plot elements are revealed and the action . . . and danger . . . proceeds.

At other times, the players take the initiative, informing the Chronicler of their plans or intentions. This might happen at the start of a new day or a new gaming session. In that case, the Chronicler describes the consequences of those actions.

Through these various interactions, a story is crafted. The individual actions, adventures, triumphs, and tragedies of the characters are part of a larger tapestry. In effect, the gaming group is creating and experiencing a novel or play, enjoying the double thrill of the creative act and the enjoyment of reading a book or watching a movie.

THE CONSPIRACY X ROLEPLAYING GAME

All roleplaying games have at their hearts the "What if . . .?" question. In *Conspiracy X*, the question is "What if aliens really were present on our planet? What if the government knew this all along? What would they try to hide?" By taking on the roles of *Conspiracy X* Cast Members, players have the chance to answer these questions and more.

Conspiracy X is a game that combines elements of government intrigue (shady covert organizations, shadow governments, paranoia), science fiction (the existence of aliens, abductions, the paranormal, alien invasions, black magic), and conflict (the war to save the planet from alien invasion, fighting other shadowy organizations and the forces of darkness).

Within these broader themes, *Conspiracy X* is suited to many different styles of play. If the Cast Members are regular operatives or civilians, the game opens itself up to all kinds of horror and paranoia scenarios. Movies such as *Fire in the Sky* and *Signs*, and series such as *The Lone Gunmen* and *Freakylinks*, are great examples of this level of play, where everyday people encounter the unexplained and the supernatural.

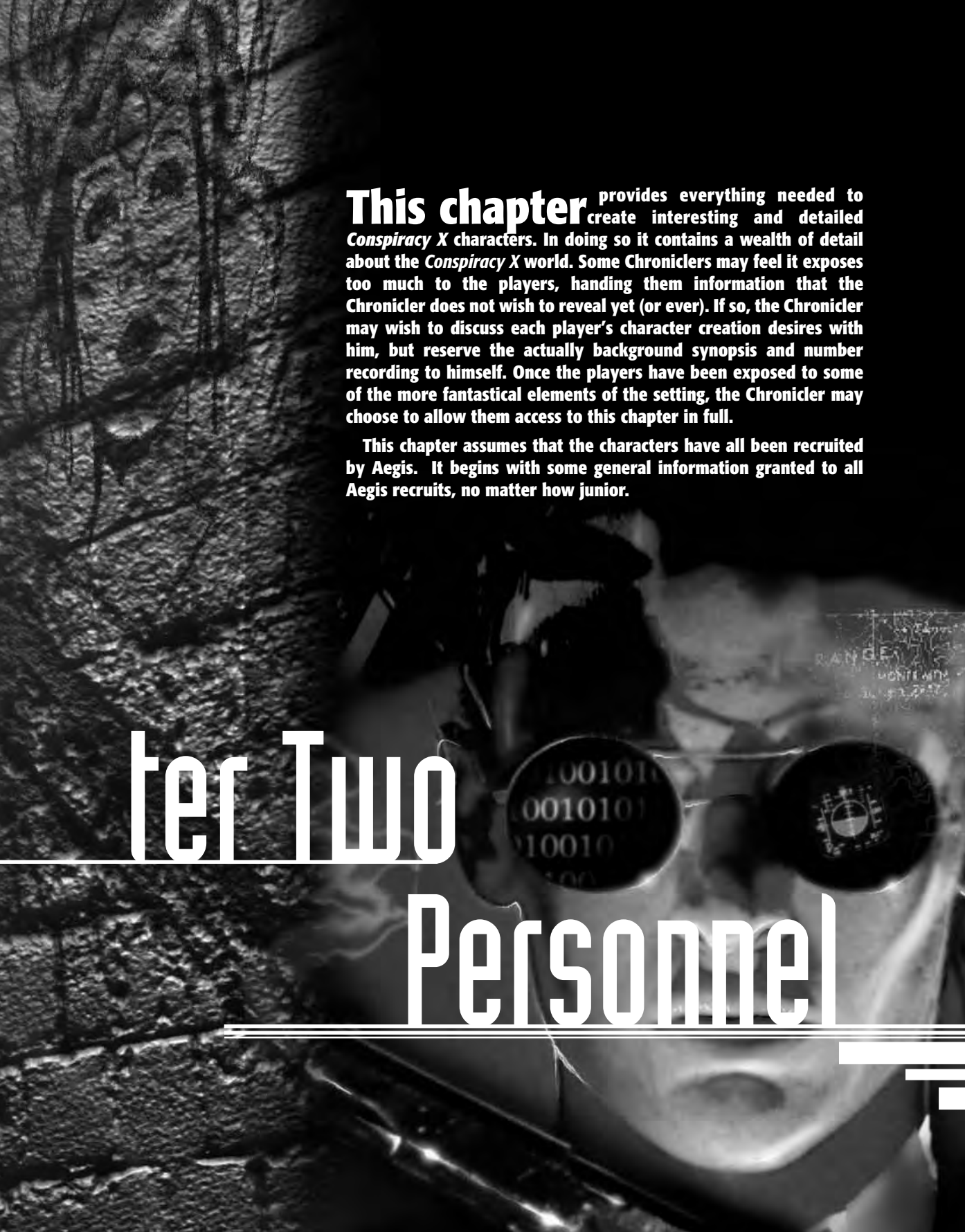
Operatives for government agencies who are familiar with the paranormal may be brought in, even if they have no inherent powers. Aegis operatives investigating strange occurrences is the heart of a *Conspiracy X* game. Movies and series such as *Twin Peaks*, *Taken*, and *The X-Files* are great examples of this type of game. The Cast Members have standing in the world. They can manipulate events from behind the scenes. This is represented by Pulling Strings. Cast Members gain some of the mystique and the influence of the "cigarette-smoking man."

For those who wish to get into the action, *Conspiracy X* supports games patterned after shows such as *24* and *Alias*, pitting covert organizations against each other in a constant battle of wits and technology. This action can be taken to extremes as well – the game supports a cinematic style such as that in *Mission: Impossible* and *Charlie's Angels*, or the Hong Kong action movies that inspired them, where gravity-defying stunts are encouraged.

By introducing "Talented" agents such as powerful psychics or those able to manipulate the world with arcane rituals, *Conspiracy X* can become even more. *Dark City*, *Akira*, and *Scanners* are great inspiration for this aspect of play.

In effect, anything is possible. From investigating Lovecraftian horrors or haunted places where teens are being killed off one by one, to alien invasions, psychic experimentation, and ultraviolent suit-clad agents battling for the survival of humanity, the world of *Conspiracy X* should challenge, thrill, excite, and inspire players and Chroniclers alike.

Chap



ter Two Personnel

This chapter provides everything needed to create interesting and detailed *Conspiracy X* characters. In doing so it contains a wealth of detail about the *Conspiracy X* world. Some Chroniclers may feel it exposes too much to the players, handing them information that the Chronicler does not wish to reveal yet (or ever). If so, the Chronicler may wish to discuss each player's character creation desires with him, but reserve the actually background synopsis and number recording to himself. Once the players have been exposed to some of the more fantastical elements of the setting, the Chronicler may choose to allow them access to this chapter in full.

This chapter assumes that the characters have all been recruited by Aegis. It begins with some general information granted to all Aegis recruits, no matter how junior.

RECRUITMENT

You have been recruited by Aegis. Maybe you started noticing something subtly wrong with the world. Your phone makes strange clicking noises, you know what someone is going to ask you before she says anything, or perhaps you lost hours, even days, which are completely unaccountable.

Maybe it wasn't quite so subtle. How did that guy in the suit rip that man's arm clean off? Your little sister has been missing for years. The police just brushed the case under an already bulging carpet, but you won't let it go. Or perhaps a routine X-ray revealed a foreign metallic object implanted in your skull. Either way, you have been exposed to something the government has been trying to cover up for decades. Something Aegis has been trying to fight since Roswell.

So who or what is Aegis? Aegis came together in the face of a single, unprecedented threat: alien invasion. Some might argue that invasion is too strong a term. No large-scale battles have been fought, no armies flood the streets, no flying saucers hover over the White House. Clearly, there is no current invasion in conventional terms. Still, ever since we discovered the truth about aliens among us, we have known that they do not have our best interests at heart. What else could we expect? They are, after all, an entirely different sentient species, with their own morals, beliefs, and goals. They care for themselves just as we care for ourselves. We do not fault them for their ambitions or their needs, nor do we support them. We fight for ourselves, for as a species that is all that we can ever do.

Aegis stands as the United States' first line of defense against the alien menace. Whatever else happens, whatever missions we undertake, whatever else we do, we should never forget that our primary mission is the defense of the nation against our foes, whoever they might be. When a new operative, agent, or researcher joins a cell, he swears an oath. He promises to hold his tongue, never to reveal to the public the truth about the war that threatens us all. He also swears to protect that same public from this insidious threat, no matter what the cost, personally or publicly. Make no mistake, joining Aegis is like joining an army. It means that you are willing to put your life, your livelihood, and your reputation on the line in order to save your people and your country.

TOO MANY QUESTIONS

We know that aliens exist; there is absolutely no doubt on this issue. We know that aliens are here on Earth; again this is unquestionably true. We even know that at least three different races of aliens exist here among us, a fact that the evidence points out conclusively. We know that the alien races are capable of doing significant harm. Finally, we know that we must be ready to protect ourselves from any threat the aliens might present, no matter what the cost.

Unfortunately, that is about all that we know for certain. We have many, many more questions than we have answers, which is why so much of what Aegis does centers around research and intelligence gathering. The alien presence is a threat. Their technology is superior to ours in almost every way, including offensive capacity. That leaves the question of motive. Why are they here? What do they want from humanity and Earth? We know that they are capable of extremely dangerous behavior, from abductions to shooting down aircraft and infiltrating the government. They have even subverted our terrestrial nemesis, the National Defense Directorate (NDD, or "Black Book" as it is known by many Aegis agents). But why?

Why now? The greatest question facing Aegis is determining why the aliens are here now. Certainly some argue that aliens have been among us all along, but there is little or no scientific evidence to support this claim. We can only say with assurance that aliens have been here among us since the mid-1940s. Anything else would be pure speculation. If we were dealing with only one alien race we could dismiss the question of "Why now?" easily: because that is when they got here. Unfortunately, we face not one but three very distinct alien races.

The question of the three races burns in the mind of every Aegis researcher. The questions they ask are questions you should ask yourself every day. We need to know what kind of threat these alien invaders represent. What are their intentions? Why are all three races making themselves known now, at this particular moment in our history? What special place does Earth hold in their interstellar schemes? What are their relations to one another? Is there a way that we can pit one race against another? Why have they not attacked in force? What kind of force do they have at their disposal? There is just so much that we do not know.

For several decades Aegis scientists, agents, and operatives have been working to answer these and other questions. In that time we have learned a great deal, but there is still much more to discover. At this point, most of what we do focuses on the gathering of information. We cannot fight a war until we know for sure who the enemy is and what they are planning. As members of Aegis, it is your job to find out everything you can about the alien threat, including identifying exactly what that threat might be. We cannot for a moment doubt that a threat exists. While no formal declaration of war has been made, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence for the hostile intentions of all three alien races. Do not fall into the trap that the NDD has succumbed to. You cannot make deals with the devil and come out ahead.

As important as gathering intelligence is, we must remember that information is only a means to an end. Data about our enemies carry great value, but we should never sacrifice our national security for them. To do so would be a terrible confusion of priorities. Furthermore, if the information you gather does reveal a threat, you should never hesitate to act against that threat. We are, on every level at every moment, soldiers

fighting a desperate battle. Aegis cells exist to act, to fight the alien threat wherever it rears its head. Never be afraid to attack, subvert, or even inconvenience the enemy. Every time you fail to act, it is a victory for the enemy.

THE BODYGUARD OF LIES

New recruits often ask the question "Why all the secrecy?" Why keep the existence of aliens a secret from the public? There are plenty of arguments against secrecy. The public has a right to know. It would rally support behind our cause. People would help flush the aliens out of their secret enclaves if everyone knew what to look for. While these arguments are not entirely without merit, they become inconsequential when weighed against the problems that public disclosure would cause Aegis, the United States, and the world as a whole.

The overriding concern is one of morale. Telling the public that alien invaders walk the Earth would create mass panic. While this might serve to rally support for a while, it would have disastrous effects on the mental state on the world's citizenry. There is also the matter of trust. Once it became known that some of the aliens looked just like humans, that others are capable of controlling minds, and that others have infiltrated the highest levels of society, the level of paranoia would rise immeasurably. Every person would look at friends, co-workers, and neighbors in a new light. Trust would all but evaporate.

Trust is an important part of the secrecy pledge. Aegis relies heavily upon government funds, agencies, facilities, and equipment to do its job. As important as the government is, it is also rife with alien and NDD infiltrators, not to mention our own operatives. Public perception of government is already at an all-time low. Should the public discover how bad things really are, how pervasive corruption and influence-peddling really are, trust would collapse completely. As bad as the situation in the government is, Aegis' official policy is "better the devil you know than the devil you don't." We know we can work with this government. Should a new system replace the current one – a very real possibility were alien infiltration to become public knowledge – much of Aegis' power and influence would be lost. It is in our decided interest to keep the current system alive, all the while fighting to cleanse it from within.

Thus, the ability to cover up, deceive, and outright lie is important to any Aegis operative. This means that Aegis is often forced to do some decidedly unconstitutional and even immoral things. Remember, we answer to no one but ourselves, for whom else can we trust to do the right thing? If it becomes necessary to silence one individual in order to protect the great secret, that is a small price to pay in wartime. We can only hope that when we have to do something regrettable, we will do it as humanely and painlessly as possible. Sometimes all that is necessary is to discredit someone's account of a UFO sighting. Other times more extreme measures must be taken. Remember, this is war, a most insidious, secret war.

HERMES

As a new recruit for Aegis, you gain access to HERMES, Aegis' secure communications network and database system. This repository of knowledge includes advanced communications capabilities, and has developed near A.I. levels of database search and retrieval, all far more advanced than anything in the public sector. You will be able to access any information on any subject that Aegis has observed or studied in the past, and you should file detailed reports on all your missions and observations, particularly any new information you recover.

HERMES links usually take the form of a top-of-the-line PDA/mobile phone. (Those with professions that cannot support such an item may request specialized units that can take almost any form.) The phones are mostly what they appear to be: advanced communication/processing devices with large full-color displays, digital cameras, digital recorder/players, microphones, walkie-talkie features, and wifi Internet connections. Each also holds a universal port for linking with other instruments. Aegis installs software and hardware safeguards that identify you each time you hold the link. Once approved, you gain access to a GPS link, a satellite uplink, a pop-out hands-free communicator, and most importantly, the HERMES database. All these features are heavily scrambled. Failsafes have been inserted that complete destroy the unit should anyone tamper with the special features.

You cannot, either directly or indirectly, contact other Aegis Cells. This would violate the cell system. HERMES will never divulge the identity of any agent or Cell, so don't ask.

If you lose your link, report it immediately, so the link's connection can be diverted. A new link will be assigned in a few weeks following internal investigations from Aegis security.

WINNING THE WAR

If we as a people are going to prove victorious when all is said and done, we must have courage. A long bloody fight is ahead of us, but it is definitely one that we can win. For now the aliens have the advantage. Our society is an open book to them, while we must struggle for every scrap of information about the enemy. Every day we learn more of them. Every day Aegis scientists and researchers discover new secrets about alien technology, biology, and psychology. We are quickly catching up to them. Now more than ever Aegis cells must fight the good fight. Every bit of information brings us closer to victory. We must learn from every defeat and inflict defeats upon the enemy at every turn. It is your sworn duty to protect your country and your world. You owe it to them and you owe it to yourself.

CHARACTER CREATION

Character creation works most like writing a short story or a script. The player creates a fictional persona, someone he would like to portray in a game. This character can be heroic, cowardly, sensitive, or silly. The Cast Member's habits, personality, and typical behavior are completely in the player's hands. The character can be a carbon copy of the player, or an utterly different person.

There are limitations, however. A character must fit the story, or, in this case, the game setting. Ultimately, it is up to the Chronicler to decide whether a given Cast Member is appropriate for a campaign. In some cases, he might decide that a character does not work for the current story, or is too powerful (or weak) for the tasks and troubles the Cast is likely to face. Players should also try to keep in mind that roleplaying is a group activity. If the Chronicler disallows a character idea or conception, he probably has a good reason. Respect his judgment.

Some players may feel overwhelmed by too many choices. Although the **Unisystem** allows players to create a character fairly quickly, deciding what kind of character to play can take a while. Sometimes it helps if the Chronicler takes the time to help each player with the creation of his character, before the first session is scheduled.

CHARACTER ELEMENTS

Unisystem Cast Members in have six basic elements. Some are conceptual (what type of character he is), others are numerical (what value Attributes he has). As a player makes each selection, he narrows down the possibilities until he finally has a clearly defined individual, ready to play. The different elements are listed next and are discussed in turn in the remainder of the chapter.

Character Type: Just what kind of person is the character? Before getting down to the numbers, the player must decide who the operative is. Bearing in mind the character's Profession, the Type will define how many points are available to the character to purchase the following elements. Details are provided on p. 31.

Profession: What organization does the character work for, if he works for one at all? Nearly all Aegis operatives have a "day job" that provides them with societal clout and resources so valued by the conspiracy. The Cast Member's Profession dictates certain Qualities and Drawbacks, skill levels, and his sphere of influence. Profession also provides the agent with a number of Pulling Strings that help him accomplish his missions. Professions are discussed in detail on p. 33 and a list of choices starts at p. 39.

Attributes: The player must purchase the character's basic capacities, both mental and physical. Attributes, both primary and secondary, are covered on pp. 33-35.

Qualities/Drawbacks: Although not required, characters are more interesting when they have some special abilities or detriments. Pulling Strings are a type of Quality. These aspects are reviewed on p. 36. A list of Qualities and Drawbacks are given on pp. 62-80; Pulling Strings are detailed on pp. 80-101.

Skills: Each character has certain training. Skills are introduced on p. 37 and a list is provided on pp. 102-111.

Finishing Touches: These are the items the character owns at the beginning of the game and the final elements such as name, appearance, etc. More on this appears on p. 38.

Character Type

Character Type determines the pool and types of character points available for creating your persona. In essence, the player "buys" the levels in Attributes, Qualities, and skills he wants for his Cast Member. Since the player only has a limited number of points in each category, he must make choices. For example, if the player makes a character too strong, he may not have enough points left over to buy a high Intelligence and other Attributes.

Four Character Types are presented in this book: Pre-Heroic, Neo-Talented, Heroic, and Talented.

Pre-Heroic

Pre-Heroic Cast Members are regular folk, living regular lives, plugging away day to day. They are slightly above average, but nothing too special. Aegis recruits lots of scientists and specialists to aid in the fight, as well as down-to-Earth, non-cinematic secret agents. Chroniclers may limit players to Pre-Heroic characters to focus on helplessness, horror, and gritty realism.

Pre-Heroic characters begin with 15 points for Attributes, 5 points for Qualities (and up to 10 points in Drawbacks), and 30 points for skills. Pre-Heroic characters may not purchase certain paranormal Qualities and should consult with the Chronicler before doing so.

Neo-Talented

Neo-Talented Cast Members are regular people who have just discovered that they possess some sort of special ability. Usually, this amounts to psychic potential. They are not particularly strong either physically or psychically, but add a psychic or "powered" flavor to a low-power game while keeping the gritty realism.

Neo-Talented characters begin with 15 points for Attributes, 5 points for Qualities (and up to 10 points in Drawbacks), 25 points for skills, and 5 points for powers. They have to purchase the appropriate powered Qualities to use any special abilities (Psychic, Focus, etc.).

Heroic

Heroic Cast Members are tougher, smarter, and stronger than Pre-Heroic characters. Heroic characters are extraordinary individuals (perhaps with a few Attributes near or at the human maximum) whose great physical or mental prowess allows them to be at the front lines of the battle for humanity.

In some games, Heroic characters may be mixed with Pre-Heroic characters to add an extra punch, as long as the players don't mind Cast Members with differing power levels.

In heroic or action-oriented games, Heroic characters are the most common types. If the game is going to involve cinematic martial arts and extreme gun-fu, Heroic characters are recommended.

Heroic Characters start out with 20 points for Attributes, 15 points for Qualities (and up to 10 points in Drawbacks), and 35 points for skills. Heroic characters may not purchase certain paranormal Qualities and should consult with the Chronicler before doing so.

Talented

The Talented are generally not as naturally blessed or skilled as Heroic characters. They make up for this through psychic or other unusual abilities, and the power they provide. Talented Cast Members may not be appropriate for all games.

The Talented have 20 points for Attributes, 10 points for Qualities (and up to 10 points in Drawbacks), 25 points for skills, and 15 points for Powers. The Talented must buy the appropriate Quality (Psychic, Corrupted, Focus, etc.) using Quality or Power points.

Paranormal Characters

The basics of psychic abilities and occult rituals are covered separately in **Chapter Five: Paranormal**. This is just a taste of what is possible, however. Full details of these vast powers are covered in the *Paranormal Sourcebook*. Neo-Talented and Talented Cast Members may be created using the material presented in **Chapter Five: Paranormal**, but their abilities may need to be modified should the Chronicler introduce the *Paranormal Sourcebook* into his campaign.

OPTIONAL SKILL POINT GENERATION SYSTEM

The basic skill point generation system allocates skill category points depending on the Character Type chosen. This optional method provides slightly more skill points by taking into account the character's age, intelligence, and social background. If the players and Chronicler decide to adopt the optional system, drop the skill point allocations from all the Character Types discussed previously and use the following formula.

Character Type: Pre-Heroic characters receive 25 points. Heroic characters receive 30 points. Talented and Neo-Talented receive 20.

Intelligence: Three points per level of the character's Intelligence Attribute. Characters with Intelligence 0 or less receive only one point.

Age: Starting characters are assumed to be 18–30 years old (player's discretion). Younger characters subtract five points from their total skill category points. Every 10 years after 30, characters add five skill points but subtract two levels from Attributes (these subtractions can be taken from any Attribute).

For example, Jack's agent is a 50-year-old Heroic character with an Intelligence 5. His base skill points are 30, with an additional 15 points for high intelligence. Due to his age, the character has an extra 10 points to put into skills, but he loses four Attribute levels. Although he originally had Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Constitution 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 5, and Willpower 3, Jack decides to reduce the character's Strength, Constitution, Perception, and Willpower to two. He has a total of 55 skill points to spend.

Status or Resources: Characters with positive Status or Resources take the highest level in either of those Qualities and add one skill point per level. Characters with Resources of zero or below do not receive a bonus or penalty.

For example, Tyler is a 23-year-old Heroic character with Intelligence 3 and Resources 1. He receives 30 points for being a Heroic character, nine points for Intelligence, zero points for age, and one point for resources, for a total of 40 skill points.

EXPERIENCED CHARACTERS

Even with Heroic-level characters, the agents generated may be under-experienced for some Chroniclers and players. This is particularly true for those planning a number of short adventures or demos during which the agents will not have the opportunity to grow into their jobs and skills. If this is the case, the Chronicler may wish to allow experienced Character Types from the beginning. Again, to preserve balance, it is recommended that agents from this level not be mixed with Pre-Heroic or Heroic characters.

Veteran

Attributes: 25 points **Qualities:** 25 points **Drawbacks:** up to 10 points **Skills:** 45 points

Talented Veteran

Attributes: 20 points **Qualities:** 20 points **Drawbacks:** up to 15 points **Skills:** 30 points

Metaphysics (Powers): 25 points

UNISYSTEM CAST MEMBERS

When employing Cast Members across **Unisystem** games, such as *All Flesh Must Be Eaten*, *C.J. Carella's WitchCraft*, or *Armageddon*, Chroniclers should consider play balance. *Conspiracy X*, *Terra Primate*, and *All Flesh Must Be Eaten* Cast Members are based on a 70-point total. In *WitchCraft*, the most common Cast Members are built with 80 character points in total. In *Armageddon*, character point totals can go much higher.

PROFESSION

Most agents are recruited into Aegis as a result of their regular profession. An enterprising player could choose an Aegis character from any walk of life and station. The conspiracy, however, recruits primarily from important military, law enforcement, and scientific communities of the U.S. government. Few street people, sandwich makers, or gardeners are called upon to battle the alien menace within the confines of the Aegis conspiracy.

Profession Packages

A character's position in life influences his skills and societal clout. These Professions are represented in *Conspiracy X* by a package of Qualities, Drawbacks, and skills and are purchased with Quality points. Also included in each Profession package is a list of Pulling Strings that the operative can call upon to assist in his Aegis tasks.

Each Profession has an associated Influence Quality type used during cell creation (see **Chapter Three: Ops Center**). Seven types or "spheres" of the Influence Quality are detailed in the Qualities section (see p. 71).

Profession packages are presented starting on p. 39.

Profession Costs

Some Profession packages may be too expensive or too influential for a novice character – the more difficult or elite Professions come with high levels of abilities and Qualities. The package costs provided include a "Quality/Skill" split, showing how much of the Profession cost is derived from Qualities (usually Pulling Strings) and how much from skills. Chroniclers may allow Cast Members to purchase Professions with both Quality points and skill points to reflect this, deducting the costs from each category as listed.

Chroniclers comfortable with a higher-powered game may either award characters extra Quality points to cover the cost of purchasing Professions, or reduce the cost of each Profession by a uniform number (we recommend five as a maximum). As an alternative, Chroniclers who wish to lower the points needed to purchase some Profession packages should remove some of the Pulling Strings, thereby reducing the overall cost.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are inborn characteristics of a character: physical strength, intelligence, senses, and so on. Two kinds of Attributes are used in *Conspiracy X*. Primary Attributes are purchased using Attribute and other character points; Secondary Attributes are calculated from a character's Primary Attributes.

Buying Primary Attributes

During character creation, Cast Members are allotted a number of points to distribute to their Primary Attributes. The exact number of points is determined by the Character Type. Attributes can be "bought" up to level five on a one-to-one basis (i.e., Strength 3 would cost three points, Willpower 4 would cost four points, and so on). Attributes above level five are much more expensive: three points per additional level. Cast Members cannot raise an Attribute past level six, the absolute maximum for humans (buying an attribute up to level six would cost eight points).

The six Attributes are Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Perception, and Willpower. Each is described in turn.

CREATING YOUR OWN PROFESSIONS

The Professions listed here concentrate on U.S. governmental personnel and secret Aegis programs. These operatives have important and powerful positions and make up the bulk of Aegis cells. Aegis does not exclude others, however. Journalists, doctors, scientists, technicians, clergy, occultists, mystics, psychics, academics, attorneys, police officers, entrepreneurs, activists, truckers, politicians, corporate officers, and UFOlogists are found among Aegis' ranks. Other government types, such as state and local law enforcement officers, politicians, and bureaucrats, are also recruited. Chroniclers and players can create their own Profession packages styled after those listed or can create Cast Members without purchasing Professions.

Instead of spending Quality points on Profession packages, Cast Members can be created by purchasing individual Qualities and Drawbacks, any skills necessary, and devising suitable backgrounds for those choices. The player and Chronicler should work together to create a rationale for Aegis' recruitment.

Players should be reminded that a character's Influence Quality is very important during the formation of the cell and for calling in favors. The Chronicler decides what Influence a Cast Member has and which type of Influence he has – this will most likely be Civilian. A character without a Profession package must purchase the necessary Influence Quality (and its prerequisites) before he can contribute to cell creation.

THE MEANING OF NUMBERS

The following paragraphs discuss various Attribute levels.

Level One: The character is below average in the Attribute. Strength 1 amounts to a poor physique, either a petite or flabby, sedentary person. Dexterity 1 indicates clumsiness, a character who is likely to drop things, not to be trusted with delicate manual work unless the person has trained very hard to do so. Intelligence 1 is not mentally challenged, but certainly a bit slow on the uptake. Perception 1 is the trait of a character who is not very aware of his surroundings, and likely to miss what's going on around him. Characters with Constitution 1 are delicate and often in poor health—they are the ones who get sick first, and their low physiques may be caused by abuse of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol. Willpower 1 depicts a person who is easily influenced by others, a follower, and somebody likely to succumb to temptation.

Level Two: This is the average for human beings.

Level Three: This is above average but not extraordinary. Strength or Constitution 3 show athletic aptitude, probably belonging to somebody who works out regularly and vigorously, or a natural athlete who has not taken time to develop his talent. Characters with Dexterity 3 are graceful individuals. Intelligence 3 indicates a bright person who can easily learn new skills, if he has the temperament to do so. With Perception 3, the character has good senses and intuition and is not easily fooled or confused. A character with Willpower 3 is rarely convinced or bullied under normal circumstances.

Level Four: An Attribute at level four is well above average. Very few people—perhaps one out of every ten in a random group—have an Attribute at this level. Strength and Constitution 4 can be found only in athletes, including the best football players in a large high school or college campus, extensively trained Special Forces soldiers, and other people who spend a large amount of time and effort keeping in shape. Dexterity 4 would only be common among gymnasts, acrobats, dancers, and other gifted individuals. Mental Attributes at level four indicate near genius (Intelligence), very acute senses and intuition (Perception), and an "iron will" (Willpower).

Level Five: This is the "practical" human limit. While people with Attributes at level five are not "record breakers," they are among the best and the brightest representatives of humanity. In a small or medium-sized community, only a handful of people will have one or two Attributes at this level, and they are likely to be well known for their strength, wisdom, or toughness. Cities, large college campuses, and groupings of Heroic characters have more of these extraordinary individuals, but they still are not common.

Level Six: This is the true human limit. A few people with "freakish" attributes may exceed it (to level seven), but they are a handful even among the teeming billions living in the 21st century. Characters with one Attribute at level six are very rare, something on the order of one in ten thousand, or less. People with more than one Attribute at level six are perhaps ten times less common, and so on.

Level Seven+: This is superhuman. Someone with Strength 7 would be as strong as a horse; Dexterity 9 connotes inhuman grace; and so on.

Strength

A measure of the physical power of the character, Strength determines how much damage the character inflicts with hand-to-hand weapons, how much weight he can carry, and how powerful he is. It also helps determine how much damage and exertion the character can withstand before collapsing. Characters apt to have a high Strength include athletes, manual workers, and soldiers. A low Strength indicates either small size and body weight, or just a lack of exercise.

A character may high jump (Strength x 10) inches and broad jump (Strength) yards. Double these numbers with a good running start.

The Strength Table shows how much a character of any given Strength can lift without much effort. Higher weights can be raised (assume a maximum lifting weight – for brief periods – equal to double the Lifting Capacity)by "pushing the limits" with a Simple Strength Test. Every Success Level achieved allows the character to lift an additional 10% of his maximum lifting weight. This effort costs the character D4(2) points of Endurance for every Success Level in the Test. A failure on the Strength Test causes D4(2) Life Points of damage – the character strained himself and tore something up.

Dexterity

Dexterity is a measure of the character's coordination, agility, and gracefulness. It is useful in activities from performing card tricks to picking pockets to punching somebody in the face (Dexterity helps the punch land; Strength determines how much the punch hurt the other guy). A high Dexterity is common among dancers, gymnasts, and pickpockets. People with low Dexterity are clumsy and ungraceful.

Strength Table

Strength	Lifting Capacity
1–5	50 lbs x Strength (Max: 250 lbs.)
6–10	200 lbs x (Strength – 5) + 250 lbs. (Strength 10: 1,250 lbs.)
11–15	500 lbs x (Strength – 10) + 1,500 lbs. (Strength 15: 4,000 lbs./2 tons)
16–20	1,000 lbs x (Strength – 15) + 5,000 lbs. (Strength 20: 10,000 lbs./5 tons)
21–25	1 ton x (Strength – 20) + 5 tons (Strength 25: 10 tons)
26–30	2 ton x (Strength – 25) + 10 tons (Strength 30: 20 tons)

Constitution

This Attribute determines how physically hardy or healthy the character is. Constitution is important when it comes to resisting diseases, damage, and fatigue. This Attribute is used (along with Strength) to determine how much physical injury the character can survive and still remain functional. Constitution also comes into play with physical skills that involve endurance, such as swimming, long-distance running, and the like.

Intelligence

This Attribute determines the character's ability to learn, correlate, and memorize information. Note that Intelligence and education are two separate things. A person can be brilliant but illiterate. Education is covered by skills, which determine what a character has learned in his life.

Perception

Perception governs the five senses of the character. It gives a general overview of the sharpness of the character's ability to sense things. This Attribute is used to find clues, notice things, and avoid being surprised.

Willpower

This Attribute measures the mental strength and self-control of the character, and his ability to resist fear, intimidation, and temptation. Willpower is important for some of the Talented characters' psychic abilities. It is also important for resisting magical coercion, psychic mind control, and the influence of panic, among other things.

Secondary Attributes

Secondary Attributes are not bought; they are determined by plugging the Primary Attributes into the formulas given below.

With the exception of Speed, Secondary Attributes are expressed by a pool of points. Certain factors (injury, fatigue, fear, the use of magic) temporarily increase or decrease the amount of points in each pool. For example, Life Points determine a character's current health. If an injury is sustained, the health (the Life Points) of the character is lowered; healing the damage eventually raises the pool back to its original level. The more severe the damage, the more points are removed from the Life Points pool.

The Secondary Attributes are Life Points, Endurance Points, Speed, and the Essence Pool.

Life Points

This Attribute determines the physical health of the character. Strength and Constitution are the determining factors. Life Points indicate the amount of physical damage the character can take before being unable to function. Disease, extreme fatigue, and some supernatural attacks drain Life Points.

Life Points are generated by adding Constitution and Strength together, multiplying by four, and adding 10 to the result. The formula is ((Constitution + Strength) x 4) + 10. The human range is 18 to 58.

Endurance Points

Endurance Points measure the character's ability to withstand fatigue and exertion before collapsing. Willpower enhances Constitution and Strength here – some people can push themselves past normal physical limits through the sheer force of will.

Endurance Points are calculated by adding Constitution, Strength, and Willpower, multiplying by three, and add five to the result. The formula is ((Constitution + Strength + Willpower) x 3) + 5. The human range is 14 to 59.

Speed

This Attribute represents how fast a person can run at maximum speed. It comes into play only on the few occasions when running speed is a consideration, such as when a character is chasing or being chased by somebody.

Speed is determined by adding Constitution and Dexterity and multiplying by two. The formula is (Constitution + Dexterity) x 2. This is the character's top speed in miles per hour. The human range is four to 24 mph. Half that amount is the number of yards that the character runs in a second.

VERY LOW OR VERY HIGH ATTRIBUTES

The human range of Attributes applies only to humans. It would be foolish to expect that a horse or an elephant would have the same Attribute limitations as human beings. Most large creatures have Strengths 7–12 (including horses, bears, and apes). Massive creatures, such as whales or elephants, have Strengths 15–20 or higher. By the same token, graceful animals such as cats, birds of prey, and the like have average Dexterity 4–7. Constitution does not vary as greatly. Large animals such as elephants are somewhat delicate. They have more Life Points than humans, but shock and disease are just as likely to bring them down.

A zero level represents very low Attributes, and a –1 indicates subhuman levels for humans above the age of five.

When dealing with low Primary Attributes, treat them as being equal to one when calculating Secondary Attributes. If the Attribute is negative, subtract it from the resulting Secondary Attribute.

For example, Michael is a frail and sickly boy with Strength –1 and Constitution 0. To determine Michael's Life Points, treat the –1 and zero as one, resulting in a base of 18 Life Points (two times four plus the base 10). Then reduce this to 17 Life Points – the negative value is subtracted from the total.

Essence Pool

Essence measures the strength of the character's soul and life force. It is not overly important for most *Conspiracy X* characters. It can be temporarily drained by strong emotions (such as fear and hatred) and by the attacks of some supernatural creatures.

Essence is found by adding the character's Primary Attributes together. Talented often have extra Essence, due to their greater control over the flows of primal energy. This extra Essence is purchased during character creation.

QUALITIES AND DRAWBACKS

Qualities give the character advantages or positive traits and therefore "cost" character points. Drawbacks limit or detract from the character – as a "reward" for acquiring them, the character gains extra points.

Points acquired from Drawbacks can be used in any point category – Attributes, Qualities, skills, and powers. For point categories other than Attributes, Drawback points may be added on a one-for-one basis. Purchasing Attribute points using Drawbacks is much more expensive. The cost to raise an Attribute one level is equal to the value of that level. For example, raising an Attribute from three to four costs four Drawback points. Further, the costs are cumulative. Raising one Attribute from three to five costs nine Drawback points.

The list of Qualities and Drawbacks starts on p. 62.

Categories

Qualities and Drawbacks are labeled by category: Mental, Physical, Social, and Paranormal. For the most part, these categories are descriptive and do not affect play. In certain instances, however, the category does matter. The primary example is Paranormal Qualities – they are generally only available to Talented characters.

Numerical Qualities/Drawbacks

Some character traits are expressed in numerical ways – examples include Attractiveness, Charisma, and Resources. They appear with bonuses (if acting as Qualities) or penalties (if acting as Drawbacks). For example, Charisma +2 grants a two-point bonus to any Task or Test that involves influencing or manipulating people through social skills. Charisma –2 does the opposite. For all these aspects, each character starts with a default value of zero.

Creating New Qualities/Drawbacks

The list presented in this book is far from exhaustive. In many cases, a "new" Quality or Drawback can be an extension or variation of an existing one. The value of the characteristic should be balanced out by the benefits or penalties it grants the character. Most should cost or be worth between one and three points – only the most powerful or crippling of them should have a value of four or higher.

PULLING STRINGS

Pulling Strings are special Qualities. They provide abilities that require certain authorizations, unique contacts, or restricted resources. Pulling Strings are granted to a character from his employment or his chosen Profession, a secret society membership, or his personal background. The Chronicler has the final call whether any given character can use any given Pulling String. It is important to remember that Pulling Strings are specifically tied to an employment sector, a job, a secret group, or a personal history – if a person loses his job, is shunned by colleagues, or "disappears" from society, those Pulling Strings may no longer be accessible.

In most cases, a Task roll must be made before the character can access the Pulling String. This signifies the process of making calls, convincing people to helping, or just filing the necessary paperwork so as not to arouse any suspicion. When making any of these rolls, add the character's Influence Quality to the result – those with greater Influence get things done that much more easily. Chroniclers may also add negative modifiers to this roll based on adverse circumstances. If a character is outside his normal area of operations, if cell phone coverage is spotty, if desired facilities, equipment, or resources are unusual in the area, or if personality clashes are present, a –1 to –6 penalty can be applied.

When accessing a Pulling String, a dice roll of one indicates a drastic failure. Not only is the requested assistance denied, but the agent loses access to the Pulling String for D6 x 2(6) months. This could be due to accidentally exposing the connection, triggering an internal investigation into resource management, losing the trust of a confidant, ruffling feathers in a particularly egregious way, or any other reason the Chronicler may decide on. The agent can re-establish the connections required through weeks of paperwork and glad-handing (see Downtime, p. 184), but another failure as drastic as this results in losing the Pulling String permanently.

A list of Pulling Strings starts on p. 80. The costs listed are for purchasing the Pulling String as a Quality separate from those granted with a Profession package. If the Pulling String normally requires a certain type of Influence Quality or a specific Profession package, that is indicated. A character without those prerequisite may purchase such a Pulling String at double the cost.

The costs of Pulling Strings are generally lower than those of other types of Qualities, as they are usually called into play less frequently. Abusing a Pulling String by calling upon these favors too often can lead to its loss, or worse plotline ramifications (e.g., investigation by Internal Affairs).

SKILLS

Skills are learned abilities, the result of training, study, or experience. In general, anything that can be taught is considered a skill. The list starting on p. 102 discusses a number of skills that may be purchased by *Conspiracy X* characters.

Buying Regular and Special Skills

To acquire skills, use the character points allocated to the skills category (as determined by the Character Type). Regular skills cost one point per level from levels one to five. After level five, each additional level costs three points.

Certain skills are more difficult to learn, requiring more time and greater dedication. They are called special skills and include Martial Arts, Medicine, and others. Special skills cost two points per level until level five and five points per level thereafter.

THE MEANING OF NUMBERS

The higher a skill level, the more proficient the character is at using that skill. In general, level one indicates a beginner or amateur, somebody who has just learned the rudiments of the skill. Level two or three represents general competency – the ability to perform average tasks with ease. Level four or five reveals extreme competence in the subject, the result of a lot of study or practice. Higher levels bring true mastery of the skill or craft, and the ability to perform the most difficult tasks with relative ease.

Skill Types

Skill Types must be specified for some skills and represent concentrated areas of knowledge within the more generic skill category. For example, within the Guns skill are the Handgun, Rifle, and Shotgun Types (among others). Types most often come into play with broad scholastic skills, such as Humanities, Science, and Language. A Type must be chosen each time the more generic skill is purchased and costs no character points.

Some Types allow a default roll when using something that requires a different Type. For example, Guns (Handgun) allows the character to use a rifle with a –2 penalty. Others do not. Piloting (Sailboat) is next to useless when faced with the cockpit of a 767 jet. Chroniclers have the final say about defaulting to another skill.

Skill Specialties

Both fiction and real life display many examples of people who specialize in specific aspects or fields of study within skills. A history student may specialize in the early Medieval period, for example, and an occultist may know a great deal more about zombies than anything else.

Specialties costs one character point, and result in a +2 bonus to Tasks involving that field of expertise. This is written as a separate skill. For example, a character could purchase Mechanic 3 for three character points. By specializing with one more point, the character could gain the separate skill Mechanic (Spacecraft) 5.

Specialties are raised by improving the base skill. For example, if the character's Mechanic skill rises from three to four, his Mechanic (Spacecraft) skill increases to six. Specialties may not be raised without increasing the base skill level.

Specialties should be distinguished from Types, which cost no character points. For example, a character might take Humanities (History) at level three during character creation. This costs the usual three skill category points. If he chooses to specialize, he might learn Humanities (Pre-Columbian History). This costs one point and piggybacks on his History skill – the Specialty skill level is five.

CREATING NEW SKILLS

It is impossible to account for every possible skill in this book. Chroniclers and players should feel free to come up with their own as needed. When creating a new skill, a few questions must be answered.

Is the skill very difficult to learn (i.e., any discipline requiring several years of training)? If so, it should be a Special Skill, with a higher point cost. Does the skill require a person to specialize (which means separate Types should be applied), or is specialization optional or additional (in which case the Specialty rules apply)? Finally, what Attributes are commonly used with the skill in question, and under what circumstances? Normally, physical activities rely on Dexterity and in some cases Perception, scholastic disciplines rely mainly on Intelligence, and so on.

POSSESSIONS

This is everything the character owns. In most *Conspiracy X* games, a detailed inventory of a character's possessions is not necessary. The average character owns a TV set, a phone, and a number of items of clothing. He lives in a rental apartment or house. Most characters also own a vehicle of some sort. The Resources Quality/Drawback varies this. A multimillionaire may own boats, airplanes, and helicopters, while a destitute character has to make do with a purloined shopping cart. Equipment specific to Aegis operations (such as weaponry, gadgets, and equipment) is covered in **Chapter Three: Ops Center**.

FINISHING TOUCHES

After the player has determined the basic elements, all that is left are a few final touches that make the character come alive and seem like more than just a collection of numbers on a piece of paper. Note that these "finishing touches" can be done just as easily at the beginning as at the end of the character creation process. Alternatively, the last touches can wait until the player starts roleplaying the character. The player should make the call on this one.

Name

This simple touch can add a number of roleplaying elements. The character's first and last name can indicate ethnic background. Some characters may adopt nicknames or "code names" in addition to their given names.

Appearance

Whether a character is attractive and charismatic is determined by any Qualities or Drawbacks purchased during character creation, but a description of appearance or demeanor makes the numbers come to life. Beyond obvious things such as hair and eye color and general physique, there are subtler elements that can help the Chronicler and the other players get a better "handle" on the character. Does he stutter, carry a pocket protector, comb his hair over a balding spot, work out a lot, carry electronic gizmos everywhere, wear tattoos or piercing, or call women "dollface."

Age

Beginning characters are assumed to be between 18 and 30 years old. Within those limits, the exact age is entirely up to the player and Chronicler. For those wishing to play younger or older characters, the Optional Skill Point Generation System sidebar gives some ideas on how to modify characteristics, although it will be rare for a youth to be recruited by Aegis.

Profession List

As detailed, Aegis recruits primarily from U.S government agencies. This bias is reflected in the choices provided in this list. Sidebars located before the package details include short histories, mission statements, or an organizational discussion for those unfamiliar with the various departments and divisions of the U.S. government. A more detailed review of Aegis-recruited agencies is provided in the *Conspiracy X Chronicler's Screen*.

Each Profession provides a cost (broken down between Quality and skill categories in parenthesis), a brief description, and the various skill bonuses, Qualities, Drawbacks, and Pulling Strings that are included in the package.

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms (ATF)

The ATF enforces the Federal laws and regulations relating to alcohol, tobacco, firearms, explosives, and arson. In January 2003, the enforcement section of the ATF was transferred to the Department of Justice.

ATF Field Agent
12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

These agents are the rank and file of the ATF. They risk their lives going through doors to apprehend gun runners, drug dealers, and other criminals. Field Agents are generally trained to work as part of a team, and it is teamwork that makes it possible for them to execute operations with minimal loss of life.

Skills: Dodge +1, Guns (Handgun) +1, Stealth +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, CEASEFIRE, Fingerprinting, SWAT

ATF Investigator
12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

Investigators have the primary responsibility of gathering sufficient information to apprehend individuals who break laws under ATF jurisdiction. This investigation may consist of searching through preexisting records, speaking with suspects, or doing field work. Once they have a reasonable case, they pave the way for the appropriate warrants so field agents can execute an arrest.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Research/Investigation +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, Fingerprinting, Search & Seizure, SWAT

The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (BDS)

The BDS protects diplomatic personnel against violent assault. It also handles testing and updating of the security of all overseas diplomatic facilities, and provides trained security personnel for those areas. The Bureau is known as a smaller and more private version of the Secret Service; its agents share a reputation for seriousness and even-tempered, dedicated service to the country. The BDS is a division of the Department of State.

BDS Advance Agent
7-point Profession Quality (5/2)

Advance Agents of the BDS investigate and assure the security of foreign sites, not only in governmental facilities, but also in civilian meeting halls and hotel rooms. Advance Agents do not have duties as glamorous as those of bodyguards, but their work is vital to the safety of American diplomats and visiting dignitaries.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Mobility, Official Agendas, Security Protocols

BDS Bodyguard
10–point Profession Quality (5/5)

Bodyguards at BDS provide safety to persons or facilities important to the State Department mission. These individuals have a higher profile and greater risk than their counterparts, the Advance Agents, but both work hand in hand to ensure the security of diplomats.

Skills: Dodge +1, Guns (Handguns) +1, Martial Arts +1, Notice +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Mobility, Official Agendas, Security Protocols

Bureau of Intelligence and Research (BIR)

The BIR works to determine all possible threats and responses to diplomatic missions all around the world. It runs a computer network that is updated daily and informs government employees of threats. Working closely with all the other American intelligence agencies, as well as with the nation's allies, the BIR is able to track and coordinate action to protect American diplomats and citizens from harm overseas. The BIR is a division of the Department of State.

BIR Analyst
9-point Profession Quality (6/3)

BIR Analysts are in charge of researching information gathered through various resources and collating that data into useful forms. They are experts at sifting through the overwhelming details of various diplomatic missions to determine which areas need further study and which ones may prove to be risky ventures.

Skills: Computers +1, Humanities (Law) +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Mobility, Official Agendas, Security Protocols

BIR Field Service Agent
10-point Profession Quality (6/4)

BIR Field Service Agents travel into foreign countries to estimate the conditions and to perform on-site research into local problems that might not show up on paper or by satellite. These agents rely on their personal experience to determine the risk factors present in any given setting, and may have some ability to blend in with the locals to gain accurate information.

Skills: Language (Type) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Streetwise +1, Survival (Urban) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Mobility, Official Agendas, Security Protocols

Bureau of Prisons

The mission of the Federal Bureau of Prisons is to protect society by confining offenders in prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, and secure, and that provide work and other self-improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens.

Aegis has some interest in recruiting Bureau of Prisons officials or corrections officers. Aegis has more often recruited prisoners. These prisoners are offered good time credits, prison privileges, and/or probation if they agree to join an Aegis cell. Of course, these operatives are watched carefully and eliminated at the slightest hint of a security leak. Further, they are usually treated as highly expendable, which they are. Sometimes the deal offered by Aegis is better than jail. A convict's Influence and Status Qualities reflects his standing in the underworld; his Resources are generally ill-gotten gains and schemes.

Criminal – Nonviolent
9-point Profession Quality (6/3)

Individuals who have been convicted of "white collar" crimes as well as crimes without physical harm to person or property are considered to be nonviolent criminals. These individuals tend to specialize in some kind of burglary, impersonation, forgery, or theft. A few of those who have been incarcerated in Federal prisons are "sprung" to serve a particular purpose for a Aegis. For that reason, they gain them access to certain Pulling Strings, which no street criminal (no matter how powerful) would have.

Skills: Disguise +1, Escape +1, Streetwise +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Criminal) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Adversary (Law Enforcement) 1, Secret (Criminal) 1

Pulling Strings: Chop Shops, Criminal Resources, Funding 1, Safe House

Criminal - Violent
9-point Profession Quality (5/4)

Individuals who have been imprisoned for violent offenses, such as murder, rape, assault, and battery, are considered to be violent criminals. These criminals usually have some skill with weapons or some ability with brawling or martial arts. A few of those who have been incarcerated in Federal prisons are "sprung" to serve a particular purpose for Aegis. They gain access to certain Pulling Strings, which no street criminal (no matter how powerful) would have.

Skills: Brawling +1, Dodge +1, Guns (Handgun) +1, Streetwise +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Criminal) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Adversary (Law Enforcement) 2, Secret (Criminal) 1

Pulling Strings: Chop Shops, Criminal Resources, Funding 1, Safe House

Prison Warden
12-point Profession Quality (9/4)

As the head of a federal prison, the warden is empowered to contain inmates using reasonable means. He also has access to a number of subordinates and to all the files on present and past criminals. Depending on his motivations, this power may be used in a variety of ways, perhaps to construct a power base or to rise in the ranks of the prison system. Immersed in the criminal element and making contacts with other wardens, the warden becomes privy to much in the criminal sphere of influence, despite the fact that he is employed by the law.

Skills: Bureaucracy +1, Humanities (Law) +1, Notice +1, Streetwise +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement or Criminal) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 2

Pulling Strings: Attorney, Chop Shops, Criminal Resources, Safe House

CAPS Field Explorer
10-point Profession Quality (6/4)

The CAPS Field Explorer is, in many ways, a highly specialized field researcher for archaeology and anthropology. As such, he has a smattering of skills to enable him to perform research and to investigate the validity of that research in the field.

Skills: Occult Knowledge +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Paranormal) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Corruption Treatment, Occult Library, Pool Data

Center for Advanced Phenomenological Studies (CAPS)

In 1966, a number of Aegis cells disappeared or were slaughtered. Aegis Prime launched an intensive internal search for a mole. In late 1966, however, one member of Aegis Prime received a surprise visit at home from a powerful occultist, Peter Henry Westmane. Westmane confronted the member with a detailed description of Aegis' current situation and problems and indicated that his mystic society had been allies of Aegis' predecessor.

Aegis Prime assigned Westmane some mundane combat/espionage specialists and sent him to track down the murderers. So began Aegis' first counterattack in the Aegis/Montague Club war. By late 1967, Westmane had successful closed the security leak and neutralized the most active and dangerous of the opposition Montague Club cabals.

Aegis Prime was now significantly aware of the supernatural power it had been overlooking and quickly moved to address this deficiency. It offered to build and fund a research facility for Westmane on the Nellis Range. This offer had the dual purpose of enabling Aegis Prime to keep close watch on Westmane and his coterie. Although obviously aware of Aegis Prime's dual motives, Westmane accepted and founded Aegis' Center for Advanced Phenomenological Studies (CAPS).

CAPS Occultist
12-point Profession Quality (6/6)

The CAPS Occultist devotes his life to learning the secret of Seepage and how to manipulate during the course of powerful rituals. Occultists follow varying beliefs about the nature of the supernatural, but they all have unfailing curiosity about these phenomena.

Skills: Occult Knowledge +2, Research/Investigation +1, Rituals (one Type) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Paranormal) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Corruption Treatment, Occult Library, Pool Data

CAPS Parapsychologist
10-point Profession Quality (6/4)

The paranormal scientists and researchers affiliated with CAPS are exposed to everything from supernatural beasts to the subtle power of psychics to the devastating ways of rituals. These individuals examine the supernatural world to gain a greater understanding of how it impacts everyday events. They may have some facility with rituals or psychic ability, or they may not.

Skills: Occult Knowledge +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Corruption Treatment, Occult Library, Pool Data

CAPS Psychic
15-point Profession Quality (11/4)

CAPS psychics are especially adept at understanding and adapting to psi energy. These abilities make it possible for them to enter others' minds, to read emotional auras, and to gather impressions about distant times and locations.

Skills: Occult Knowledge +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Paranormal) 1, Psychic, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total).

Pulling Strings: Corruption Treatment, Occult Library, Pool Data

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The bulk of Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) programs are of little use or benefit to Aegis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), however, are charged with the prevention and control of infectious diseases. The CDC conduct medical research and publicity, aid in the control of epidemics, and track of infectious diseases.

CDC Scientist
16-point Profession Quality (10/6)

A scientist working for the CDC specializes in the investigation of dangerous diseases and often works with very lethal doses of viruses. As such, this individual makes biohazard control an integral part of his training, unless he wants to become an inadvertent test subject. Often, CDC scientists are called to assist in the field, and in keeping with this need, some scientists learn a modicum of skills to make their stay in the field more effective. In some situations, this may even require the scientist to enter into hostile territory to evacuate patients who suffer from an outbreak. The ability to perform data-gathering under such conditions is much appreciated.

Skills: First Aid +1, Medicine (Diseases) +1, Medicine (Biohazard Control) +1, Science (Biochemistry) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: CDC Labs, Dangerous Toxins, Dangerous Virus, Hidden Cures, Quarantine

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

The Central Intelligence Agency is charged with collecting, collating, and analyzing foreign intelligence. The CIA works closely with the DEA and the FBI on drug law enforcement and counterterrorism. The CIA also liaises with the intelligence and security services of friendly governments, sharing intelligence information and providing advice and training when requested.

CIA recruits quality people in nearly all fields of study. Scientists, engineers, economists, linguists, mathematicians, secretaries, and computer specialists are but a few of the disciplines continually in demand. Some are specialists – physical and social scientists, doctors of medicine, lawyers, etc.

The CIA's secrecy and specializations make it an ideal target for Aegis recruitment. Unfortunately, the agency's high public profile and the frequent, intrusive Congressional oversight detract from an Aegis operative's flexibility and missions. Aegis agents in the CIA are even more paranoid than their cellmates.

CIA Agent
13-point Profession Quality (10/3)

An agent working for the CIA is trained to use other governmental agencies to retrieve information about foreign countries. Often, obtaining this information requires the agent to engage in a number of risky missions. The CIA works hard to protect its agents and will generally disavow any knowledge of wrong-doing. As such, agents are sometimes not very popular with their counterparts in other agencies, but they persist in their duties, believing they are working for the general good.

Skills: Dodge +1, Guns (Handgun) +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: CIA Caches, CIA Maps, CIA Training Facilities, Lab/Workshop, Mobility, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

CIA Analyst/Technician
10-point Profession Quality (7/3)

CIA Analysts gather information from a variety of sources, which they pass along to agents or superiors. The analysis might reveal a situation that needs further investigation or it might confirm suspicions about certain activities. Technicians are often brought into the field to obtain first-hand information about the situation, and they are trained to handle themselves well if the situation becomes volatile.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronic Surveillance +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: CIA Maps, Lab/Workshop, Mobility, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

PROJECT CYGNET

Project CYGNET specializes in remote viewing and psi warfare. CYGNET remote viewers are among of the best in the world. Each one is instructed in both psychic and practical matters to ensure that all are as useful as possible to the Committee and their assigned cells. CYGNET operatives may be called upon by the Committee at any time to task sites related to another cell's operations.

CYGNET remote viewers are typically attached to a government intelligence organization, conducting top-secret reconnaissance. Almost every legitimate agency may be considered a candidate for CYGNET attachment. Psychic may be assigned to an Aegis cell that has a particular need.

PROJECT GRAYBEARD

The goal of Project GRAYBEARD is to bring psi to the battlefield and make it a new tool for warfare. The project specifically works to develop Telepathy and Telekinesis. While GRAYBEARD has not achieved all of its goals, it has been successful in creating a number of psychic agents.

Like CYGNET agents, GRAYBEARD operatives are usually attached to active government intelligence organizations. Again, any legitimate government agency may have a Graybeard operative in its ranks. Graybeard operatives are also assigned to Aegis Cells that have infiltrated or desire to infiltrate those organizations.

THOTH

THOTH is a supercomputer accessible only by Project CYGNET members. THOTH is programmed to sift through all available databases to correlate and analyze information gained from CYGNET remote viewers and other psychics. By cross-referencing all its databases, THOTH is able to find the most likely event, person, or place related to the information fed into it. THOTH has access to the NSA's and CIA's databases, generally available sites on the Internet, and HERMES, but only for purposes of identifying remotely viewed locations. THOTH is accessed through specially encoded HERMES links.

In addition to standard reports that must be filed with HERMES on a regular basis, CYGNET operatives are expected to upload information gained from all psychic sources into THOTH.

CYGNET REMOTE VIEWER

16-POINT PROFESSION QUALITY (13/3)

Remote Viewers are highly trained psychics with powers that are prized in the intelligence world. They are called upon to provide advance intel for other agencies, spy on secret locations, and listen in on conversations half a world away. All CYGNET Professions must choose a second agency as their assignment. The following are not eligible as assigned agencies: CAPS, Project MKULTRA, and Project Rasputin.

Due to the stresses on the psychics' mind, it is common that they have an Emotional or Psychological Problems Drawbacks.

Skills: Notice +2, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Psychic (usually Clairvoyance), Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Experimental Psi Drugs, Funding 1, Psi Labs, THOTH

CYGNET SCIENTIST/PARAPSYCHOLOGIST

12-POINT PROFESSION QUALITY (8/4)

Although not psychically able, the Scientists and Parapsychologists conduct most of the research, helping the Remote Viewers with their training and investigating the psychic phenomena. All CYGNET Professions must choose a second agency as their assignment. The following are not eligible as assigned agencies: CAPS, Project MKULTRA, and Project Rasputin.

Skills: Occult Knowledge +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), and Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Experimental Psi Drugs, Funding 1, Psi Labs, THOTH

GRAYBEARD OPERATIVE

14-POINT PROFESSION QUALITY (11/3)

GRAYBEARD Operatives are field agents who are highly trained in all areas of psychic ability, specializing in fields that can be used in psi warfare.

Skills: Notice +1, Research/Investigation +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Psychic, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Emotional or Psychological Problems (choose one Mild), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Experimental Psi Drugs, Psi Labs, THOTH

DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (DEA)

The DEA is the division of the Department of Justice charged with investigating and apprehending major domestic and international drug criminals, while addressing the growing problem of drugs and violence in communities across the United States. Its methods range from extensive surveillance and undercover work, both in America and abroad, to SWAT team assaults on large drug operations. The DEA regularly conducts paramilitary interdiction and search-and-destroy missions on foreign drug operations.

The combination of investigative and paramilitary functions in the DEA, and its extensive network of offices, makes it an attractive source of operatives for Aegis. Aegis has been active in the DEA since its inception in 1973.

DEA Field Agent

11-point Profession Quality (8/3)

These professionals monitor suspected drug criminals, obtain information through undercover work, and arrest those in violation of the law. Agents may specialize in one facet of these duties. Generally, the duties of a DEA Field Agent are fraught with risk to life and limb, and agents work to be in peak condition at all times.

Skills: Guns (Handgun) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Streetwise +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, Asset Forfeiture, Fingerprinting, SWAT

DEA Intelligence Analyst

11-point Profession Quality (7/4)

A DEA Analyst gathers information about criminals, suspicious activities in foreign countries, flight logs, ship movements, crop production, and all manner of information that relates to the manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs. This data can be communicated to Field Agents, who follow up on leads and information.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronic Surveillance +1, Notice +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Asset Forfeiture, Fingerprinting, SWAT

DEA Forensic Scientist

14-point Profession Quality (8/6)

Forensic Scientists employed by the DEA to determine the exact nature of drugs being smuggled across the border. These individuals may work with consultants to study new kinds of drugs, or they may choose to specialize in a field of research conducive to investigating new organic-based and synthetic drugs.

Skills: Medicine (Forensics) +1, Medicine (Pharmaceutical) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Biochemistry) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Asset Forfeiture, Fingerprinting, Lab/Workshop, SWAT

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (DIA)

The DIA is a combat support agency of the Department of Defense (DOD) responsible for collection and analysis of foreign military intelligence. Both Aegis and the NDD have steered DIA toward the gathering of intelligence on the three known alien races. Although both organizations have infiltrated the DIA – Aegis to a lesser degree than the NDD – an informal truce has arisen over the years. This keeps intelligence disruptions to a minimum.

DIA Field Investigator
15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

This agent gathers information about foreign military activities, either through direct infiltration of a specific country's defense system, immersion in a country's population, or use of reliable contacts in strategic positions. Field Investigators typically "go to ground" for extended periods of time so as not to compromise their affiliation with the DIA, and as such they are well trained to survive on their own for months at a time.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Research/Investigation +1, Stealth +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Contacts (choose one Type) 1, Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, DARPA Labs, NIMA Support, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence), Stopping Investigations

DIA Intelligence Analyst
15-point Profession Quality (11/4)

Intelligence Analysts for the DIA spend most of their time crunching numbers, decoding messages, and looking for predictable patterns. They are responsible for monitoring movements of foreign military forces and noticing trends in hostile activities abroad. These individuals draw from a wide array of subjects to predict and to understand the mobilization of military forces, including psychology, political science, statistics, and engineering.

Skills: Computers +1, Notice +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Cryptography) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, DARPA Labs, NIMA Support, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

DEFENSE TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER (DTIC)

The DTIC was created in 1945 to facilitate and co-ordinate defense-related research programs. Today, the DTIC supplies information on planned, ongoing, and completed defense-related research to U.S. government agencies and their contractors. The scope of DTIC's collection centers on defense-related material but stretches into nearly every science and discipline, including biology, chemistry, energy, environmental sciences, oceanography, computer sciences, sociology, logistics, and human resources.

One of the principal DTIC resources is the Information Analysis Center (IAC) program. The 12 IACs collect, analyze, synthesize, and disseminate worldwide scientific and technical information in clearly defined, specialized fields or subject areas. IACs enable client scientists to keep abreast of the enormous and fast-paced developments in a wide range of scientific and technical fields. These immense repositories of information are special targets of Aegis in its continuing effort to stay at the forefront of technological developments, and to decipher and analyze alien technology. IAC scientists and analysts are heavily recruited into Aegis.

DTIC IAC Analyst
12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

Analysts collect, analyze, and distribute technical information in very narrow fields of study, some of it unclassified, and some of it at varying levels of classification. These analysts work to be at the forefront of technological developments and may even come into contact with alien technology from time to time.

Skills: Electronics +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (choose one Type) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: DARPA Labs, Grants, Intelligence Agency Control, NIMA Support

DTIC IAC Scientist/Technician
11-point Profession Quality (8/3)

IAC personnel keep abreast of the enormous and fast-paced developments in a wide range of scientific and technical fields. They establish and maintain comprehensive knowledge bases that include historical, technical, scientific, and other data and

information collected on a worldwide basis. These individuals run experiments and conduct studies to verify the feasibility of a number of technologies, including highly classified ones.

Skills: Electronics +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (choose one Type) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: DARPA Labs, Grants, NIMA Support

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION (FBI)

The FBI is the principal investigative arm of the Department of Justice, with jurisdiction over more than 200 categories of federal crimes. Top priority has been assigned to five areas: counter-terrorism, drugs/organized crime, foreign counterintelligence, violent crime, and financial crime.

The FBI's broad jurisdiction and extensive intelligence network make it a prime target for Aegis infiltration. The excellent qualifications of FBI special agents make them extremely valuable. Further, the FBI's training, analysis, and laboratory facilities are highly useful resources for Aegis cells.

FBI Field Agent
9-point Profession Quality (6/3)

Field Agents conduct investigations of federal crimes, receiving rigorous training in a number of areas. Agents may work independently, as members of a team, or with state/local law enforcement while pursuing their investigations. Generally, they are held to very high standards, in an attempt to ensure that their loyalties are not compromised. They perform their duties efficiently and effectively, without undue influence.

Skills: Guns (Handgun) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: FBI Forensic Laboratory Analysis, Fingerprinting, Quantico Training Facility

FBI Intelligence Analyst
12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

These individuals use a variety of research methods to piece together information that may help both Field Agents and other officials in the successful investigation and prosecution of federal crimes. Intelligence Analysts decode encrypted files, track behavioral patterns, manipulate photographic or video images, or sift through mounds of documents.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Notice +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: DNA Database, FBI Forensic Laboratory Analysis, Fingerprinting, Lab/Workshop, Quantico Training Facility

FBI Forensic Scientist
13-point Profession Quality (9/4)

These scientists have access to one of the most comprehensive crime laboratories in the world. This allows them to perform a wide range of tests from ballistics to medicine to chemistry. Most scientists specialize in a single field, relying on their counterparts for assistance when required. Generally, FBI Forensic Scientists are the cream of the crop from across the country, and competition is fierce for this type of position.

Skills: Medicine (Forensics) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Forensics) +1

Qualities: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: DNA Database, FBI Forensic Laboratory Analysis, Fingerprinting, Lab/Workshop, Quantico Training Facility

ICE Border Patrol Officer
11-point Profession Quality (8/3)

The Border Patrol is responsible for maintaining control of U.S. borders. It is a highly mobile force of uniformed agents who spend most of their time patrolling 8,000 miles of international boundaries in vehicles, aircraft, or boats, as well as on horseback or on foot. These agents apprehend more than a million illegal aliens per year.

Skills: Driving (Cars) +1, Guns (Handgun) +1, Streetwise +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, Border Control, Criminal Tracking, Vehicle Check

ICE Customs Forensic Scientist
14-point Profession Quality (10/4)

Customs Scientists ensure that merchandise (both exported and imported) has been accurately identified in order to protect tax revenue and ensure fair trade. Some scientists are hired for their expertise in a specific field, usually medicine or technology, to ascertain whether the contents of shipments are accurately represented by the accompanying documentation.

Skills: Bureaucracy +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Forensics) +2

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, CEASEFIRE, Criminal Tracking, Customs Analysis, Search & Seizure

ICE Intelligence Analyst
11-point Profession Quality (8/3)

Intelligence Analysts collect, evaluate, analyze, and disseminate information relating to all ICE missions. More often than not, Intelligence Analysts find themselves wading through mounds of documentation and paperwork related to the validity of alien residence in the United States. All agents report to the Headquarters Command Center, which maintains communications between offices 24 hours a day.

Skills: Bureaucracy +1, Computers +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Border Control, Criminal Tracking, Intel Files, Vehicle Check

BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE)

With the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the functions, expertise, resources, and jurisdictions of several once-fragmented border and security agencies were merged and reconstituted into Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the DHS's largest investigative bureau. The agencies that were either moved entirely or merged in part, based upon law enforcement functions, included the investigative and intelligence resources of the United States Customs Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the Federal Protective Service, and the Federal Air Marshals Service.

ICE is the investigative arm of the Border and Transportation Security Directorate (BTS), the operational directorate within the DHS tasked with securing the nation's borders and safeguarding its transportation infrastructure. The Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has assumed the task of protecting the country's borders within the DHS' command. The largest component within the DHS, the BTS employs more than 100,000 men and women. The Bureau's law enforcement powers and access to the country's borders make it a valuable source of Aegis agents. Aegis concentrates on the Special Agents and forensic scientists. Rarely does it draw from the ranks of Customs Inspectors.

ICE Investigator

13-point Profession Quality (10/3)

Investigators focus on the enforcement of immigration laws within the interior of the United States. Plainclothes special agents investigate violations of immigration law and aliens involved in criminal activities. Agents often participate in multi-agency task forces against narcotics trafficking, violent crime, document fraud, and organized crime. They also try to identify incarcerated aliens who are deportable as a result of their criminal convictions. Agents monitor and inspect places of employment to apprehend unauthorized alien workers and to impose sanctions against employers who knowingly employ them.

Skills: Research/Investigation +1, Streetwise +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, Border Control, Criminal Tracking, Intel Files, Vehicle Check

ICE Special Agent

12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

Special Agents investigate suspected violations of narcotics smuggling, money laundering, child pornography, customs fraud, Intellectual Property rights, and arms exporting laws. Special Agents also have unique border search authority that allows them to search, without warrant, any person, conveyance, or article at or near any U.S. border.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Humanities (Law) +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

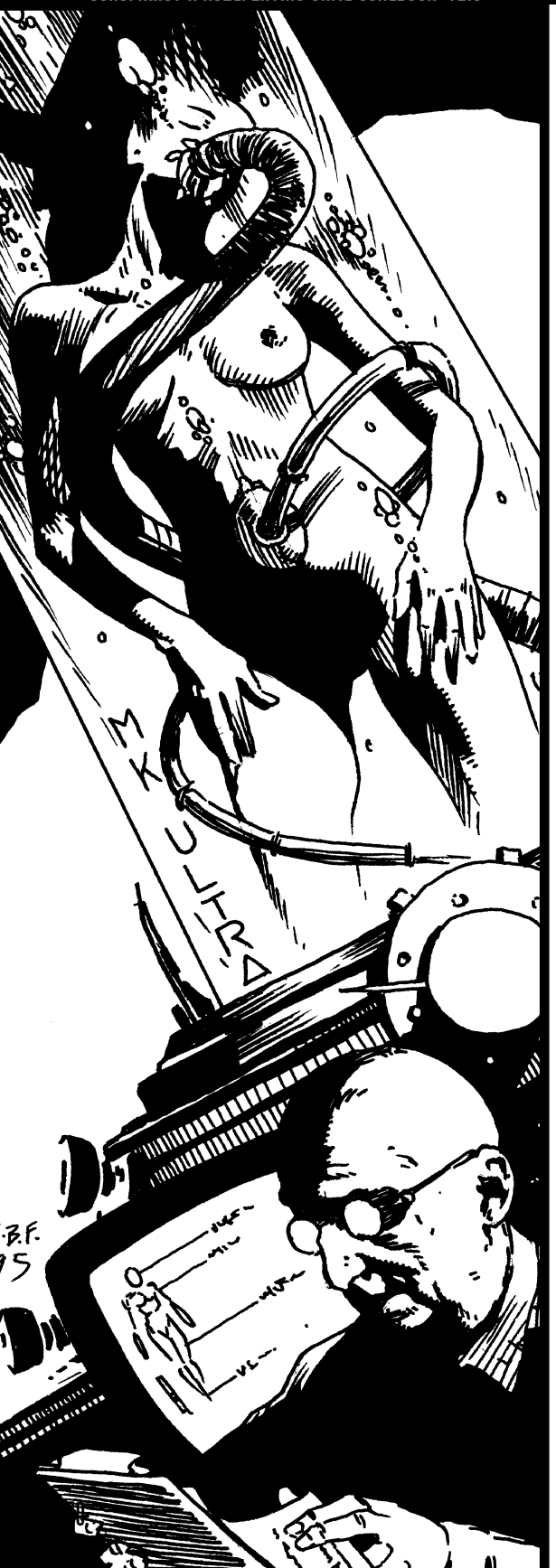
Pulling Strings: Arrest Powers, Border Control, Criminal Tracking, Customs Analysis, Search & Seizure

PROJECT MKULTRA

During its "official" CIA lifetime starting in 1952, MKULTRA researched and tested a variety of mind-control techniques, hypnotism and electroshock, toxins and drugs, and other highly dubious enterprises. The test subjects were more often than not unknowing or unwilling. In 1963, Project MKULTRA was officially terminated.

The most promising lines of research, including all the psychic programs, were relocated and suborned by Aegis, currently housed at a medium-sized complex several miles away from the Ranch on the Nellis Range. Research findings are disseminated using HERMES, and a synergistic approach is encouraged. The pooled but independent research team structure has yielded impressive results in the areas of submerged personalities, psychic disciplines, psychic drugs, and behavior modification.

MKULTRA has produced a number of psychically active operatives. These personnel are some of the most important and valued of Aegis assets.



MKULTRA Operative

15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

These agents have training in both spycraft and psychics, which means they are quite crafty and deadly. They are given a wide berth, due to their level of intensity and the frenzy with which they pursue their roles. Almost all operatives have some history of psi drugs, usually resulting in fierce addictions. MKULTRA Operatives live on the edge and are usually monitored by their superiors.

Skills: Research/Investigation +1, Stealth +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Psychic, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Addiction (Psi Drugs) 4, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Experimental Psi Drugs, MHIC-EDOM, Mind Control Drugs, Psi Labs

MKULTRA Psychic

15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

The standard MKULTRA individual is a psychic, specifically trained to retrieve information using less orthodox means. These psychics often employ devices and drugs to make their tasks easier, and some individuals become reliant on these resources to function. Psychics are also constantly undergoing new types of training in attempts to develop new psychic talents.

Skills: Notice +1, Research/Investigation +1, Surveillance +1.

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Paranormal) 1, Psychic, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Addiction (Psi Drugs) 4, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Experimental Psi Drugs, MHIC-EDOM, Mind Control Drugs, Psi Labs

MKULTRA Scientist/Parapsychologist

12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

These individuals are responsible for training the psychics and operatives of MKULTRA, and they work on the development and refinement of new psychic talents. They are also responsible for monitoring MKULTRA agents' talents and abilities and selecting individuals for specialized training and/or treatment.

Skills: Instruction +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Experimental Psi Drugs, Mind Control Drugs, Psi Labs

Moondust Linguist
12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

Most Moondust missions contain a Linguist, who is responsible for surmounting any language or cryptological obstacles encountered. Usually trained in a number of languages, the individual is expected to breaking codes and make basic interpretations of novel communications. In deciphering the meaning of different types of equipment and documentation, the agent can expedite the retrieval of the most important elements if the team is unable to collect everything at the site.

Skills: Language (Type) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Cryptography) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Hyperlingual 1, Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, BLUE FLY Transport, Lab/Workshop

Moondust Ops Specialist
12-point Profession Quality (10/2)

On Moondust missions, the Ops Specialist ensures that the team operates safely and effectively to, from, and at the crash site. The specialist is responsible for planning insertion and extraction, and for overseeing the efficient retrieval of alien craft. He is also ultimately responsible for deciding when to abort the mission or to call in for assistance from HQ.

Skills: Research/Investigation +1, Tracking +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, BLUE FLY Transport, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

Moondust Tech Specialist
14-point Profession Quality (11/3)

Tech Specialists gather data, material, and photographs at the site and "cleaning" the site for any possible public attention. The specialist's attention to detail is what makes the retrieval so valuable and so seamless. By gathering information about the crash site, conditions of the craft, etc., it is possible to use this information to reverse-engineer some of the craft's less operational systems, thus saving researchers valuable time.

Skills: Myth and Legend (UFOlogy) +1, Notice +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, BLUE FLY Transport, Lab/Workshop, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

Moondust NAIC Technician/Engineer
13-point Profession Quality (10/3)

The National Air Intelligence Center (NAIC) is a scientific study group that researches and exploits any data or wreckage retrieved by the Moondust/BLUE FLY teams. The NAIC is a legitimate, broad-based agency entrusted with a great deal of weapons development and analysis, and is responsible for USAF computer security. The NAIC Engineer seizes whatever information can be provided by the extraction team and uses it to reverse-engineer and modify the technology retrieved.

Skills: Electronics +1, Engineer (Alien Tech) +1, Science (Physics) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

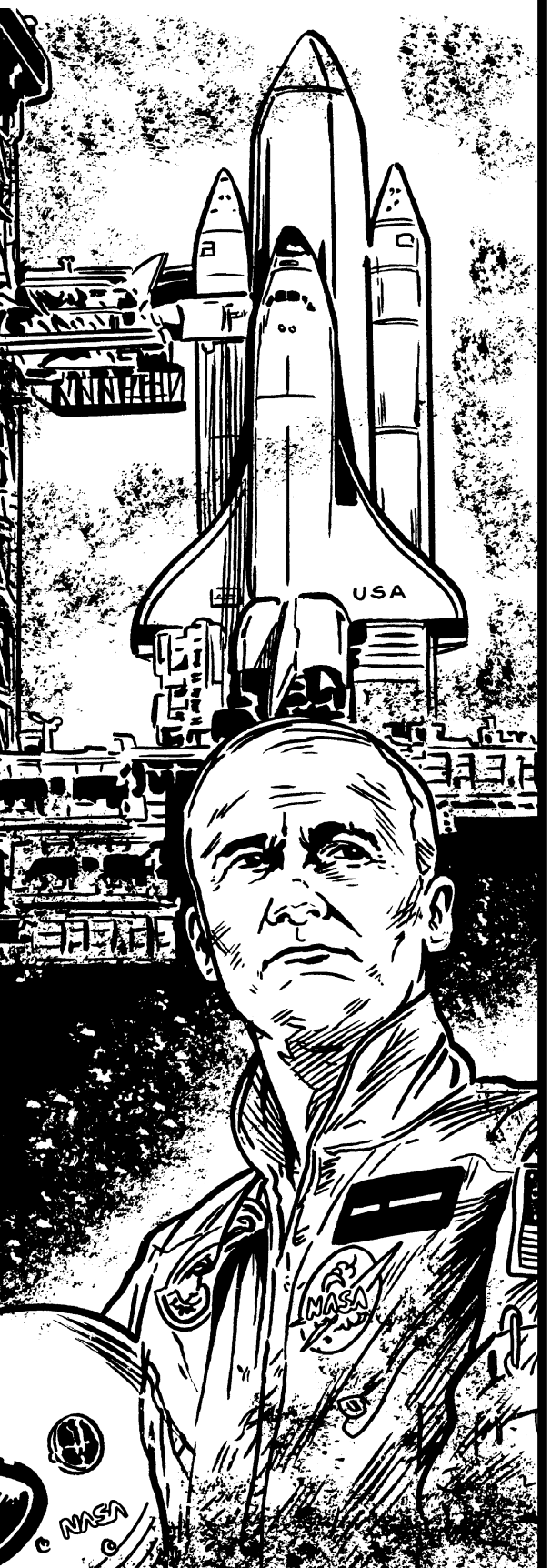
Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, BLUE FLY Transport, Funding (+2 Levels), Lab/Workshop

PROJECT MOONDUST

The governmental about-face after the Roswell incident raised real public controversy, and the Air Force was forced to commission a second study on the UFO phenomenon. This 1952 program, Project BLUEBOOK, was to be the definitive governmental statement. Aegis Prime determined that direct control of BLUEBOOK was too risky, so it established a more secretive screening program entitled Project MOONDUST. Aegis Prime arranged that all UFO reports and "alien" downed aircraft be reviewed by MOONDUST first, and a "sanitized" version of the material was handed on to BLUEBOOK. Not surprisingly, the Condon Report (named after the physicist heading the study group) revealed that no conclusive evidence supported the existence of alien life. Project BLUEBOOK then closed its doors to the apparent satisfaction of the general public. MOONDUST, however, continues to this day and has become the first response team for downed UFOs, alien technology, and alien subjects.

The remaining legitimate, overt portion of Project MOONDUST is called Project BLUE FLY. BLUE FLY's official duty is the retrieval of crashed foreign spacecraft, satellites, and missiles. For most of its existence, BLUE FLY was directed at fighting the Warsaw Pact, but of late it has evolved into more of a space-oriented search and rescue operation. As with the rest of MOONDUST, BLUE FLY is entirely under Aegis control.

A large contingent of MOONDUST personnel is situated at a complex several miles from the Ranch on the Nellis Range. A series of smaller teams, however, are scattered about the country and at foreign bases to allow for the quickest response time to downed space vehicles.



Moondust BLUE FLY Pilot

15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

BLUE FLY pilots specialize in transport, quick response, and stealth insertion and extraction. They are prepared at a moment's notice and are able to do their job as unobtrusive as possible, both in the air and on the ground. Many BLUE FLY pilots also fly missions related to their stated purpose, retrieval of foreign craft.

Skills: Pilot (Helicopter) +1, Pilot (Jet) +1, Stealth +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, BLUE FLY Transport, Specialized Aircraft

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION (NASA)

NASA is responsible for the coordination and advancement of civilian space exploration and study. NASA consists of the Headquarters Offices located in Washington, D.C. and a number of research centers scattered about the county. Aegis primarily recruits from the Human Exploration and Development of Space Enterprise (HEDS), the Office of Aeronautics and Space Transportation Technology (OASTT), and the Office of Space Science (OSS). Aegis uses each of these agencies to direct and contain human knowledge of space, both near and far.

Human Exploration and Development of Space Enterprise (HEDS) claims to be dedicated to opening the space frontier and to extending human life into the far reaches of space.

The Office of Aeronautics and Space Transportation Technology (OASTT, also known as the Aeronautics Enterprise) is supposed to push technological boundaries and to sustain U.S. leadership in civil aeronautics and space transportation.

The Office of Space Science (OSS) is tasked with solving the mysteries of the universe, exploring the solar system, discovering planets around other stars, searching for life beyond Earth, and charting the evolution of the universe and understanding its galaxies, stars, planets, and life.

Neither NASA nor the Air Force is engaged in day-to-day UFO research. At least, that is the story Aegis wants disseminated to the public. In truth, selected NASA individuals review UFO-related articles, evaluate UFO-type spacecraft drawings and reports of UFO sightings, and consider applications for employment in the field of aerial phenomena investigation.

NASA is a vital resource in Aegis' efforts to combat extraterrestrial operations. NASA maintains a fleet of spacecraft, NASA astronauts are uniquely qualified to operate in micro-gravity environments, and NASA researchers have been designing and analyzing spacecraft for decades. NASA's focus on space also makes it the perfect platform for monitoring and maintaining secrecy about alien activities in and around our planet.

NASA HEDS Administrator

10-point Profession Quality (8/2)

Administrators inform the public about the viability of space travel, the possibility of habitat construction, and the necessity of space research. With the amount of negative publicity regarding "wasted money" at NASA, they face a difficult task. When they are not involved in public outreach, they are sifting through information from recent shuttle missions and satellite imagery to further space exploration.

Skills: Research/Investigation +1, Science (Physics) +1

Qualities: Influence (Military or Civilian) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars

NASA HEDS Ground Crew

11-point Profession Quality (8/3)

The HEDS Ground Crew maintains the space shuttle and rockets used for NASA missions. The ground crew has a great deal of access to the base and equipment used for the missions. These individuals range from engineers in charge of assembly of the shuttle to the men who clear the launch pad of debris.

Skills: Electronics +1, Engineer (Space) +1, Mechanic +1

Qualities: Influence (Civilian) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars

NASA HEDS Mission Specialist

13-point Profession Quality (10/3)

These specialist astronauts perform scientific experiments aboard space missions. Each individual is trained for a specific role on a single flight, and their expertise is related to the mission. These specialists include not only scientists, but also pilots and other support staff. All individuals receive intensive training in zero gravity, and most individuals hold some type of advanced academic degree.

Skills: Acrobatics +1 and one of the following skills to reflect specialist area: Piloting (Space Shuttle) +1, Science (Astrophysics) +1 or Systems Operations (Communications) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars, Specialized Aircraft

NASA OASTT Engineer

17-point Profession Quality (12/5)

These individuals create schematics for space-travel assets and work closely with corporations that plan to take advantage of space exploration, either for leisure travel, cargo shipment, or communications operations. Engineers work at adapting current technology for more space-worthy ventures and often use remote sources of information, such as alien technology (knowingly or unknowingly), to further their research.

Skills: Bureaucracy +1, Computers +1, Electronics +1, Engineer (Space) +1, Science (Astrophysics) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, Lab/Workshop, Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars

NASA OASTT Technician

16-point Profession Quality (12/4)

Technicians work with OASTT Engineers to jury-rig components and to create workable prototypes to promote corporate investment in space exploration and travel. They often find themselves with access to odd pieces of technology and may use them in an attempt to tinker with pre-existing technology to improve upon it.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronics +1, Engineer (Space) +1, Science (Physics) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, Lab/Workshop, Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars

NASA OSS Engineer

12-point Profession Quality (8/4)

These engineers are responsible for the development of space technologies, including many that will benefit non-space science programs. One of the biggest advances has been the Telerobotics program, which lead to the development of the Mars Pathfinder Sojourner rover. They are actively creating robots for future missions.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronics +1, Engineer (Space) +1, Science (Robotics) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars

NASA OSS Technician
13-point Profession Quality (8/5)

Space Science Technicians construct devices according to the schematics provided by engineers and make modifications depending on the outcome of a number of test runs. They provide feedback based on those trials. Their practical expertise and creativity usually leads to viable suggestions, so they are often included in brainstorming group sessions.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronics +1, Engineer (Space) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Physics) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Satellite Surveillance (Standard), Secret SDI Gun Stars

NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY (NSA)

The National Security Agency/Central Security Service (NSA/CSS) is responsible for centralized coordination, direction, and performance of highly specialized intelligence functions. As the nation's cryptological organization, NSA employs this country's premier codemakers and codebreakers. A high-technology organization, NSA is on the very frontiers of communications and data processing. In addition, NSA is one of the most important centers of foreign language analysis and research within the government.

As the world becomes more technology-oriented, NSA's mission becomes increasingly challenging. This mission involves the protection of all sensitive information that is stored or sent through national security systems. NSA professionals go to extraordinary lengths to make certain that our government systems remain impenetrable.

NSA Computer Scientist
14-point Profession Quality (8/6)

The United States' premier codemakers and codebreakers, NSA Computer Scientists are on the very frontier of communications and data processing. These agents design cipher systems that protect the integrity of U.S. information systems, while searching for weaknesses in adversaries' codes.

Skills: Computer Hacking +1, Computer Programming +1, Computers +1, Electronic Surveillance +1, Electronics +1, Science (Cryptography) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Hyperlingual 1, Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: "Blanket" Wiretaps, "Codebreaker" Supercomputers, Computer Security Database

NSA Intelligence Analyst
15-point Profession Quality (11/4)

These field hands of the NSA monitor and analyze the communications of the nation. Intelligence Analysts provide information on individuals' and groups' backgrounds to support their conclusions. They work hand in hand with the Computer Scientists in controlling the information flow across the world.

Skills: Computer Hacking +1, Computers +1, Electronic Surveillance +1, Research/Investigation +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: "Blanket" Wiretaps, Computer Security Database, NIMA Support, "No Questions Asked," Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

OFFICE OF ENERGY RESEARCH (OER)

The Department of Energy is responsible for providing scientific, educational, and institutional leadership in the promotion of efficient energy use, diversity in energy sources, and a secure national defense. For the most part, the divisions of the Department of Energy are administrative and regulatory and thus do not greatly concern Aegis.

The Office of Energy Research, the program which includes most Aegis personnel, administers projects in high energy and nuclear physics, biological and environmental research, basic Energy sciences, fusion energy sciences, and computational and technology research. These scientific areas have provided Aegis and HERMES with significant information and technological developments.

OER Scientist/Technician
11-point Profession Quality (6/5)

Office of Energy Research staff are constantly experimenting with alternative energy sources and with finding ways to make current energy resources more efficient. They are responsible for tracking energy usage and projecting a timeline until current natural resources are exhausted. They also complete research in related fields, such as organic chemistry, in attempts to understand how forces of nature access and exhaust resources.

Skills: Computers +1, Medicine (Type) +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Type) +2

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence, Science & Research, or Military) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1

Pulling Strings: Lab/Workshop, Species Identification

GROOM DRY LAKE RESEARCH FACILITY (THE RANCH)

The Ranch was established as an Aegis base of operations in 1952 on the Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range in Nevada. Over the years, Aegis has diverted military and other funds into the Ranch to maintain its status as the best operation headquarters technologically possible. A number of different cells operate at the base, in a variety of different areas. A few of these personnel know about some of the others; many are unaware of any other part of the conspiracy. This increases security and keeps operatives on their toes.

Groom Lake operates as a standard military base. Soldiers, scientists, technicians, and politicians with the proper clearances have access to the regular operations and specially staged portions of the base. On the other hand, plenty of room is available at the sprawling complex for isolated laboratories, test facilities, shooting ranges, and electronically locked offices. These are where the Aegis operatives perform their duties.

Professions at the Ranch focus almost exclusively on the alien threat. The pilots who test-fly alien aircraft are almost always part of Aegis cells, as it is very difficult to hide alien technology in a spacecraft. Scientists and researchers at the Ranch become part of Aegis cells if their work is valuable and sensitive enough. Both serve crucial roles in expanding Aegis' knowledge of alien technology and physiology.

Ranch Scientist/Technician

14-point Profession Quality (11/3)

These individuals are charged with creating, manufacturing, repairing, and constantly debugging all the state-of-the-art technology that is developed on the Ranch. They generally have some kind of specialization related to a specific technological field, but a number of scientists also engage in cross-training to expedite research and to formulate cross-divisional hypotheses.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronics +1, Science (Type) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, Lab/Workshop, Mobility, No Trace, Ranch Analysis, Specialized Aircraft (Aurora)

Ranch Test Pilot

17-point Profession Quality (12/5)

Nearly every piece of technology constructed and tested on the Ranch has something to do with aeronautics. The test pilots are the hot dogs of the sky, pilots crazy enough to fly highly experimental aircraft. Without these guys, countless developments and advances would never have been perfected. Their Piloting (Aurora) skill covers craft, including the Aurora, that may be reverse-engineered from alien tech and therefore may not behave in the same way as regular jet aircraft.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronics +1, Piloting (Aurora) +1, Piloting (Jets) +2

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Alien Technology, Mobility, No Trace, Ranch Analysis, Specialized Aircraft

PROJECT RASPUTIN

As early as 1939, Stalin authorized and funded a highly secretive group of psychic and occult researchers headed by a celebrated Russian psychic, Wolf Gregorievich Messing. This group greatly aided Russia's war effort and unknowingly worked with the Watch against the Secret Doctrine Nazi occultists.

Thereafter, the paranormal group was reformulated and refocused toward psychic research. The group was headed by Dr. Sergei Markova, whose 10-year-old daughter Tatyana was the star subject. Stalin also ordered the elimination of any outsiders who displayed psychic tendencies. Tatyana, who had developed into a brilliant young physicist and powerful psychic, took over the project in 1954. Stalin humored Markova when she asked to label the group Project Rasputin.

In 1958, one of Khrushchev's first official acts as Premier was to triple funding for Project Rasputin and focus it principally toward Cold War spy activities. By this time, Markova's ground-breaking team had developed rudimentary psychotrons (psychic-enhancing devices). In 1977, Markova achieved her greatest triumph, presiding over the launch of the psychotron satellite *Alexis* and the development of a training program for the cosmonauts who would be its operators aboard the *Mir* space station. A year later, Markova and key documents relating to her research disappeared. The Soviets blamed the CIA, but the U.S. government and even Aegis could not uncover those responsible. Rasputin continued operations as a Soviet program until 1991. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the general breakdown of Russian government and society, Project Rasputin found itself unfunded and friendless. Aegis tracked down and coopted or neutralized most of Rasputin's major participants.

Today, Rasputin operates in a number of facilities across the U.S., particularly at a research complex several miles from the Ranch on the Nellis Range. These research teams and psychic subjects are not all aware of Aegis but are monitored by Aegis Prime just as MKULTRA teams are.

Rasputin Psychic Agent
18-point Profession Quality (16/2)

This individual is trained in psychics, with an emphasis on psychotron use. A number of these agents were recruited in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and it is not uncommon for Rasputin agents to have connections in Russia or Eastern Europe.

Skills: Electronics +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Psychic, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Occult Library, Psi Labs, Psychotrons, Satellite Alexis

Rasputin Scientist/Parapsychologist
14-point Profession Quality (11/3)

These individuals train the psychics and operatives of Project Rasputin, work on the development and refinement of psychic talents, and are responsible for engineering psychotrons. These researchers help bridge the gap between science and psionics, but their discoveries are closely guarded secrets, kept from the mainstream research publications at all costs.

Skills: Instruction +1, Research/Investigation +1, Science (Parapsychology) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Paranormal or Research) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Occult Library, Psi Labs, Psychotrons, Satellite Alexis

USAF Air Staff Officer
16-point Profession Quality (13/3)

The Air Staff is responsible for Air Force preparedness, personnel, and support. The Chief of Staff of the Air Force serves on the Joint Chiefs of Staff and advises the President and Congress on military plans and operations. Air Staff Officers directly influence USAF unit organization, planning, and supply.

Skills: Bureaucracy +1, Computers +1, Instruction +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

U.S. AIR FORCE (USAF)

By far the most infiltrated of the Armed Services, the Air Force is matched only by NASA as a core power base for Aegis. From politicians to administrators to combatants to technicians, the Air Force supplies Aegis with countless valuable personnel.

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Military Aircraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

USAF Intelligence Officer
17-point Profession Quality (15/2)

Intelligence Officers are responsible for gathering information, both domestic and abroad, relevant to the technological advances, security measures, and personnel assignments within the USAF. The data gathered are used for threat assessment and for mission planning, as well as for more mundane issues, such as efficient use of resources and budgeting.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, DARPA Labs, Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support, No Trace, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

USAF Pilot
15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

Pilots are the backbone of the USAF, and most pilots are proficient with a handful of aircraft. Many pilots choose to specialize, either in terms of mission types or aircraft. They generally keep themselves in top physical condition so they maintain optimal performance under adverse conditions.

Skills: Computers +1, Pilot (choose one Type) +2

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Military Aircraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, Specialized Aircraft

USAF Technician
15-point Profession Quality (11/4)

USAF Technicians perform tasks not only related specifically to aircraft, but also for communications systems, data retrieval and analysis, weapons targeting, and mission specifications. Technicians are almost always enlisted personnel. In a few cases, civilians may be hired to provide specialty expertise.

Skills: Electronics +1, Engineer (Type) +1, Mechanic +1, System Operations (Communications) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Military Aircraft), DARPA Labs, Mobility, Specialized Aircraft

USAF Secretariat Officer

18-point Profession Quality (16/2)

Individuals on the Secretariat staff control the training and operations of the Air Force and liaison with the President and his staff. Congressional members and other governmental officials also access the Air Force through the Secretariat.

Skills: Bureaucracy +1, Instruction +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 5, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Military Aircraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

US Army Helicopter Pilot

13-point Profession Quality (10/3)

Helicopter pilots are trained to maneuver their aircraft in a number of highly adverse conditions, such as poor visibility, difficult weather patterns, and enemy hostility. Pilots are generally given specific missions but are expected to improvise as needed in order to complete their assignments. Helicopter pilots provide support, extraction, and transportation for Army forces.

Skills: Mechanic +1, Notice +1, Pilot (Helicopter) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Military), Military Training Facilities, Mobility

US Army Intelligence Officer

15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

Intelligence Officers are responsible for gathering information, both domestic and abroad, relevant to the technological advances, security measures, and personnel assignments within the Army. The data gathered are used for threat assessment and mission planning, as well as for more mundane issues, such as efficient use of resources.

Skills: Research/Investigation +1, Stealth +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

U.S. ARMY

The U.S. Army has long been the power base of the NDD. For this reason, and because it is so important in the U.S. national defense, Aegis has devoted some effort to infiltrating this service but has met with only partial success; Aegis influence in the Army is limited. For the most part, Aegis draws combat and technical personnel from the Army for missions and operations. The few upper management and command personnel whom Aegis has recruited are strictly used as watchers and moles reporting on Army and NDD activities.

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, DARPA Labs, Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support

US Army Ranger
15-point Profession Quality (12/3)

Rangers are the most elite force the Army has to offer. They are experts at stealth and maneuvering behind enemy lines. Rangers are trained to survive in all manner of settings with a minimum of resources. When operating as part of a team, each member has some kind of specialization, as well as a number of cross-trained skills.

Skills: Demolitions +1, Guns (Assault Rifle) +1, Stealth +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Military), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

US Army Technician
13-point Profession Quality (9/4)

Army Technicians perform a wide range of tasks, including maintaining communications systems, providing for data retrieval and analysis, improving weapons targeting, and gathering mission specifications. Technicians are almost always enlisted personnel. In a few cases, civilians may be hired to provide specialty expertise.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronic Surveillance +1, Electronics +1, Mechanic +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, DARPA Labs, Military Training Facilities, Mobility

USMS Deputy Marshal
11-point Profession Quality (9/2)

Deputy U.S. Marshals carry out hundreds of special missions yearly related to the Service's broad federal law enforcement and judicial security responsibilities. Generally, Deputy Marshals are hand-selected for specific tasks, depending upon their abilities and their tenure with the USMS.

Skills: Guns (Handgun) +1, Humanities (Law) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Serious)

Pulling Strings: Asset Forfeiture, Back-Up, Fingerprinting, Search & Seizure, SWAT

USMS Special Operations Group Marshal
11-point Profession Quality (9/2)

The Special Operations Group (SOG) is a specially trained and highly disciplined tactical unit. In the Missile Escort Program, these individuals provide security and law enforcement assistance to the Department of Defense and the U.S. Air Force during the movement of Minuteman and cruise missiles between military facilities. In the Judgment Enforcement Teams (JET), select persons receive special financial training and are assigned to the Financial Litigation Units of certain U.S. Attorney offices. Generally speaking, the members of the SOG specialize in a single task over an extended period of time, which results in the USMS being willing to fund extensive training.

Skills: Guns (Handgun) +1, Notice +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Asset Forfeiture, Attorney, Back-Up, Fingerprinting, Search & Seizure, SWAT

UNITED STATES MARSHAL SERVICE (USMS)

Each of the 95 federal districts has its own federal Marshal, who heads USMS operations in that district.

As part of the Justice Department, the duties of the Marshals Service include asset forfeiture, court security, investigation and apprehension of federal fugitives, custody of federal prisoners, transport of federal prisoners, and protection of witnesses. The Marshals Service is responsible for the management and disposal of seized and forfeited assets bought with the proceeds of drug trafficking and organized crime. It has primary jurisdiction nationwide in conducting and investigating fugitive matters involving escaped federal prisoners, probation, parole, and bond default violators, and warrants generated by DEA investigations and other related felony cases.

Given the Marshals Service's wide range of duties and specialized investigation and operations capacities, Aegis has targeted it for recruitment. Although no federal Marshals have time to devote to actual cell operations, a number of junior and senior Deputy Marshals are part of Aegis cells.

U.S. NAVY

Neither Aegis nor the NDD has devoted significant resources to infiltrating the Navy. Indeed, when either organization has tried to push recruitment into the Navy, it has met an inexplicable resistance and several significant security breaches have resulted. At present, Aegis limits itself to the naval aviators and space programs and certain special forces. NDD has made inroads in the U.S. Marine Corps. Neither has managed a toehold in the higher political or administrative structure, or the major command groups.

USN Intelligence Officer

16-point Profession Quality (14/2)

Intelligence Officers are responsible for gathering information, both domestic and abroad, relevant to the technological advances, security measures, and personnel assignments within the U.S. Navy. The data gathered are used for threat assessment and for mission planning, as well as more mundane issues, such as efficient use of resources and budgeting.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Watercraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

USN Naval Aviator

16-point Profession Quality (13/3)

It takes a careful combination of skills to be able to take off and land on a runway the length of a seagoing vessel, but naval aviators are adept at doing just that. Their ability to launch from an aircraft carrier makes them one of the most mobile, if short-range, forces in the world.

Skills: Piloting (Helicopter) +1, Piloting (Jets) +1, Sports (Parachuting) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 3, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Watercraft & Aircraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, Satellite Surveillance (Intelligence)

USN Sailor

11-point Profession Quality (8/3)

Sailors comprise the backbone of naval military forces serving on destroyers, battleships, carriers, submarines, and a variety of support craft. All sailors receive basic training before proceeding into specialties. Most sailors become proficient at serving on a specific type of ship, and some become specialists in communications, weapons systems, and navigation.

Skills: Guns (choose one vehicle weapons Type) +1, Piloting (Boat) +1, Piloting (choose one Type) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Watercraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility

USN SEAL

13-point Profession Quality (8/5)

Often considered the most elite classification of Navy personnel, SEAL teams operate under the cover of darkness and silence as they make their way through deep waters to arrive on distant shores or to wreak havoc with enemy vessels. These individuals develop expertise with a variety of physical skills but are also entrusted to make split-second decisions and to find ways of surviving on their own, so they must possess substantial intellect as well.

Skills: Demotions +1, Guns (Assault Rifles) +1, Piloting (Raft) +1, Sport (SCUBA) +1, Stealth +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Watercraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support

USN Technician

12-point Profession Quality (9/3)

Technicians are responsible for the maintenance and upgrading of systems on naval vessels. These systems include computer, power, propulsion, SONAR, weapons, life support, and communications. Some of the maintenance and upgrading occurs in dry-dock, but more often than not, these tasks are ongoing and are completed while the vessel is under sail.

Skills: Computers +1, Electronics +1, Systems Operations (SONAR) +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Science & Research) 1, Military Rank 1, Resources (Middle Class), Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Base Clearance, Cheaper Vehicles (Watercraft), Military Training Facilities, Mobility, NIMA Support

U.S. SECRET SERVICE (USSS)

The Secret Service protects the lives of the President and Vice President of the United States and other important government officials and their immediate families. The Secret Service also provides security at a number of government buildings, including the White House complex, the Treasury Building, and Treasury Annex. Their connections to the Treasury Department remain, despite the Secret Service becoming part of the Department of Homeland Security in January 2003. The Secret Service is also charged with the detection and arrest of any person committing any offense relating to coins, currency, stamps, Government bonds, checks, credit/debt card fraud, computer fraud, and false identification.

Since the security debacle that resulted in Aegis' part in the Kennedy assassination, Aegis has been particularly careful about recruitment in the Secret Service. Most Secret Service operatives are deep-cover moles who do not engage in field work and who report directly to a member of Aegis Prime.

USSS Agent

10-point Profession Quality (7/3)

These agents are charged with monitoring counterfeiting, money laundering, and other crimes. They are granted access most about federal buildings, using hidden passageways to facilitate easy movement, and are granted high levels of security clearance.

Skills: Electronic Surveillance +1, Research/Investigation +1, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Intelligence) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Extreme)

Pulling Strings: Criminal Tracking, Governmental Access, Intel Files, Official Agendas, Sending Presidential Orders

USSS Security Specialist

12-point Profession Quality (6/6)

These agents surround the President and other important personnel in the U.S. government. They also provide security for most major federal buildings and are aware of the movements and agendas of almost all major governmental officials. For the most part, these individuals receive physical training similar to that received by enlisted soldiers.

Skills: Driving (Cars) +1, First Aid +1, Guns (Handgun) +1, Notice +2, Surveillance +1

Qualities/Drawbacks: Influence (Law Enforcement) 1, Resources (Middle Class), Status 1, Obligation (Total)

Pulling Strings: Criminal Tracking, Governmental Access, Intel Files, Official Agendas, Sending Presidential Orders

LIST OF QUALITIES AND DRAWBACKS

Non-Paranormal Qualities and Drawbacks may be taken by any *Conspiracy X* character. Paranormal traits should only be taken after consulting with the Chronicler.

Abductee
2-point Paranormal Quality

At some point in the character's past, he was abducted by aliens. The exact details of the event are to be decided by both the player and the Chronicler. Still, whichever race or group abducted him, they know all about the agent and his history and may still be watching him. The character gains Myth & Legend (UFOlogy) +2, the Contacts (UFO Group) 1 Quality, and the Adversary 2 Drawback.

Academic [Outcast]
1-point Social Quality or Drawback

As a Quality, this is simply called Academic. Aegis has probably targeted the character because of his brains. He's possibly published some highly regarded papers or developed some theories that are frequently quoted in scientific periodicals. In some cases, the character can simply mention his name (or he may be recognized) to help smooth an investigative or research process – this adds a +2 bonus on certain Research/Investigation rolls. It can also expose the agent if he is working covertly, however.

As a Drawback, the character is an Academic Outcast. He once tried to pursue a career in traditional academia, but his interest in bizarre lines of research made him a pariah among his peers. It is now impossible for him to gain respect in traditional academic circles. This makes certain research more difficult, adding a –2 penalty for Research/Investigation projects if the academic seeks information or services from others and is recognized.

Acute/Impaired Senses
2-point Physical Quality or Drawback

This trait applies separately to one of four senses: vision, hearing, touch, smell/taste. Acute or Impaired Senses indicate one or more senses that are better or worse than normal for a person with that Perception Attribute.

When bought as a Quality, an Acute Sense gives the character a +3 bonus to any Perception-related Test or Task that relies on that sense. If acquired as a Drawback, an Impaired Sense imposes a –3 penalty to Perception-based Tests or Tasks.

Some Impaired Senses (vision and hearing in particular) can be easily corrected through the use of glasses, hearing aids, and similar devices. If the impairment is eliminated by the use of such devices, the Chronicler should reduce the value of the Drawback to one point.

It is possible to have more than one type of Acute or Impaired Sense, or to have one Acute and another Impaired. For obvious reasons, a character cannot select both the Impaired and Acute versions of the same sense.

Addiction
Variable Mental Drawback

An addict must have a substance, even against his better judgment. Most addictive substances are unhealthy and illegal. Those concerns matter little to the addict, however; when the craving hits, he can rarely resist it. He often does things he would normally never consider in order to satisfy his need, from cheating and stealing to committing serious crimes to selling his body or even betraying his friends.

When an addicted character hasn't had his usual "fix," he suffers from debilitating withdrawal symptoms. Most mental actions (e.g., any Tests or Tasks using Intelligence, Perception, or Willpower) are at a penalty equal to the value of the Drawback (so, a character with a two-point Addiction suffers a –2 penalty to most mental actions) until the addict can get what he needs. The most severe drugs (such as heroin) also produce strong physical effects; such addicts have a withdrawal penalty of –3 to all physical actions in addition to the above penalty on mental actions.

The value of this Drawback is determined by the severity of the addiction and the relative effects of the drug or substance. A detailed description of the effects of different addictive substances would fill an entire book or more. Chroniclers should adjudicate the game effects of a "high" on a character. This can range from a small penalty for being slightly "buzzed" to the complete stupor of a heroin trip. In the game, as in real life, drugs are dangerous and unpredictable, and an addicted character is often unable to control himself.

The Addiction Point Value Table provides guidelines for the value of a given type of addiction. Chroniclers should modify these values as desired.

Addiction Point Value Table

Habitual drinking or smoking: 1 point.

Heavy drinking or smoking, light use of marijuana or LSD: 2 points

Heavy use of marijuana or LSD: 3 points

Alcoholism, habitual use of barbiturates or cocaine, psi drug: 4 points

Habitual use of heroin, heavy use of barbiturates or cocaine: 5 points

Heavy use of heroin: 6 points

Overcoming this Drawback amounts, at best, to denying the craving "one day at a time." Resisting the craving requires a series of daily Willpower Tests. For those up to the level of the character's Willpower, these Tests are Simple. For each one after that, the Tests are Difficult. All Tests suffer a penalty equal to the point value of the Drawback, plus an additional –1 to –4 depending on the strength of the drug and its availability (tobacco is so available and addictive that Willpower Tests are at a minimum penalty of –4 or even higher). Once the character accumulates ten Success Levels in succession from successful Willpower Tests, one experience point may be spent to reduce the strength of the addiction by one point. Another ten Success Levels in succession are needed for the next point, and so on, until the Drawback is eliminated. If any Test is failed during the course of accumulating the ten Success Levels, all Success Levels are lost, and the accumulation process must begin again.

Stephen has Willpower 3 and a two-point Addiction to marijuana. He starts to kick the habit and begins making daily Simple Willpower Tests. These Tests have a –2 penalty for the level of the Addiction and a further –1 for the drug's availability and potency (Chronicler's judgment). For three days, Stephen rolls six, eight, and 15 (see the Rule of 10, p. 157). Adding his Willpower doubled (6) and subtracting his penalties (–3), the results are nine (one Success Level), 11 (two Success Levels) and 18 (five Success Levels). This equals eight Success Levels. Stephen needs only two more Success Levels to bring the Addiction down to a one-point Drawback. Unfortunately for Stephen, though, the going gets tougher, and Difficult Willpower Tests are now required. The next day, Stephen rolls a four. Adding his Willpower (3 – no doubling) and subtracting his penalties (still –3), the result is four. This failure sends Stephen in desperate search of a "fix." If he decides to try to kick the habit again, a new series of Willpower Tests must be begun with no Success Levels accumulated.

This struggle should be a major part of the character's roleplaying. A convincing depiction of the torments of the addict may be rewarded with bonuses to the Willpower Tests.

Adrenaline Surge
2-point Physical Quality

A character with Adrenaline Surge is capable of working himself into a frenzy, flooding his system with noradrenaline and endorphins. This gives the character a brief burst of inhuman strength and completely blocks pain signals from reaching the brain. An Adrenaline Surge lasts 10 Turns, during which time Strength and Willpower for all purposes are increased to six. While a character is operating under the influence of an Adrenaline Surge, ignore all penalties imposed by damage, including those in Consciousness Tests. If the agent is damaged severely enough, Survival Tests still apply with normal penalties or modifiers. Once the surge wears off, immediately apply the effects of any damage taken by the character while boosted, plus an additional D10(5) Life Points. Taking this advantage allows a character only a single Adrenaline Surge per mission, but it may be bought more than once. For example, taking this as a four-point Quality allows two uses per mission, etc.

Adversary
Variable Social Drawback

The character has made an enemy, or he belongs to a group, race, or nation that automatically attracts the enmity of others. An Adversary is more than somebody who dislikes the character, however. He, she, or they wish nothing less than the destruction of their target. The player should devise a reason why his character has earned the enmity of the Adversary. The Chronicler can then weave this enemy into the plot in any way he sees fit.

The more powerful the Adversary, the higher the value of this Drawback. Individuals are worth one to three points, depending on their resources and abilities. A Pre-Heroic person would be worth one point; a Green Beret or a multimillionaire three points. An organization may be worth two to five points, depending on its power. A gang of thugs would be worth two points; the police department of a city three to four points (depending on its size and competence). A large national agency such as the CIA would grant five points or more, especially if the character is "wanted" rather than being the subject of a personal grudge. The value of the Adversary can vary also depending upon how actively the individual or group is pursuing the character. An Adversary who keeps the agent under constant surveillance will be worth more than a gang whose actions depend upon chance encounters. If the Adversary is unlikely to appear frequently, the Chronicler can reduce the point value or disallow it altogether.

Ally
4-point Social Quality

A character may be assigned to assist another organization or agency. In return, the character gains access to additional Pulling Strings. The Cast Member purchases a Profession as normal, at the usual cost, but then chooses a second Profession as the Ally. The character has access to all the Professional Pulling Strings that Profession would normally provide, in exchange for an Obligation Drawback to that agency (level 1). Any Influence Tasks required to access these additional Pulling Strings may be modified at the Chronicler's discretion, depending upon how accepted the character is within the allied agency's ranks.

Ambidextrous
3-point Physical Quality

Ambidextrous Cast Members can use either hand with equal proficiency. This gives them a natural advantage in combat situations. An ambidextrous Cast Member gains one extra combat action at no penalty each Turn if fighting with a weapon in each hand. This applies to close-combat weapons (swords, knives, baton) and ranged weapons (pistols, SMGs), unless such weapons are designed to be used with two hands (assault rifles, shotguns). The extra action can be used for defense if the character is armed with a melee weapon in one hand.

Amnesia
2- or 6-point Mental Drawback

The agent has lost part or all of his memory. As a two-point Drawback, he still remembers who he is, but a good portion, perhaps several years' worth, of his memories are missing. They may have been lost during an alien abduction or as a result of long-term drug-testing programs conducted by MKULTRA. The character just does not remember. What happened during the forgotten time period is up to the Chronicler, who may impose new Qualities and Drawbacks later as the agent starts to discover the lost memories.

The six-point version is more serious. The individual does not remember anything about his past, including his name. He may wish to take a form of the Official Identity Quality, having his old identity erased from official records as well as from his memory. The old identity may exist somewhere and he runs the risk of being recognized at some time or place, but worst of all, the agent has no idea what he can or cannot do. The Chronicler generates the character's skills, background, and contacts – everything. This places the character in the unique and possibly dangerous position of having every action, reaction, encounter, and conversation become a learning process.

Animal Animosity/Empathy
2-point Social Quality or Drawback

The character's presence has a strange affect on animals. As a Drawback, the character spooks all animals nearby. The animals are openly hostile and either run or attack if the Cast Member comes too close. Normally tame house pets hiss or bark, wild animals attack immediately, and herds generally stampede at the sight of him. This can be due to body language, scent, or other reasons. If the Chronicler agrees, the cause could even be Paranormal.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Animal Empathy means that animals never harm or attack the character, even if they have been specifically trained or bred to be hostile (providing he does not harm them). Both wild and domestic animals are calm and quiet in his presence.

This Quality/Drawback may provide a penalty or bonus to any Riding Task at the Chronicler's discretion.

Artistic Talent
3-point Mental Quality

Some people have a natural gift for producing astounding works of art, even if they lack formal training. Artistic Talent affects only one form of artistic expression, such as Painting/Drawing, Sculpture, Singing, etc. It is possible to buy this Quality multiple times – each additional purchase grants the bonuses to an additional type of art.

The character receives a +3 bonus to all related Task attempts in creating a work of art. Even if the Task is failed, a minimum of one Success Level is always acquired – even a failure by the truly talented has artistic merit.

True artists have very strong souls. A character with Artistic Talent adds 12 Essence points to his pool, representing the power of his soul. In some cases, this also makes artists more likely to be targeted by entities that feed on Essence, which may explain the often-tortured existence of true artists.

Atlantean Nanotech
Variable Paranormal Quality

Most of the enigmatic Atlanteans' impressive personal abilities are derived from their mastery of nanotechnology, microscopic machines capable of working on a molecular level. The Atlanteans' bodies are filled with nanites, which are transported by the bloodstream and quickly perform amazing alterations to cell structures.

Atlantean nanites are specialized. Some nanites construct delicate cybernetic systems throughout the body, giving the Atlantean conscious control over its natural organic systems. Others connect the bearer's nervous system to the wireless computer network that the Atlanteans use to pilot their spacecraft. Other nanites rework the very structure of the Atlantean's body, making it superhumanly strong and fast.

Aegis has very restricted access to some of the nanotech possessed by the Atlanteans. With Chronicler permission and sufficient plotline rationale, certain systems may be chosen by Cast Members. Each system is a separate Quality, and each must be purchased separately.

Due to their classified nature, Atlantean Nanotech is detailed in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 224).

Attractiveness
Variable Physical Quality or Drawback

Average people have Attractiveness 0, which means they look plain and undistinguished unless they take steps to enhance their appearance (clothing, make-up, and poise always make a difference). Positive values in Attractiveness indicate pleasing features, while negative values indicate ugliness, scars, or unpleasant characteristics. A character's Attractiveness value can be added to or subtracted from any Test or Task that involves making an impression on other people. On the other

hand, when trying to intimidate or scare people, positive Attractiveness values have no effect; negative ones count as bonuses. For example, a character with an Attractiveness –3 would add +3 to any intimidation Task.

Note that the physical Attributes of a character determine exactly how his Attractiveness is expressed. For example, a character with Constitution 3 and Attractiveness 4 appears extremely athletic, likely tanned from outdoor exercise, with a well muscled body. A character with a Constitution 1 with the same Attractiveness rating is probably delicate and pale with almost doll-like features.

Attractiveness costs one point per level if bought as a Quality, or adds one extra character point if acquired as a Drawback. After character creation, Attractiveness can change only by events that modify the character's entire appearance – scarring, plastic surgery, etc.

Attractiveness ranges from –5 to +5 in humans. A +1 or +2 make the person stand out in a crowd and attract attention unless the character somehow hides his features. At +3 or +4, the character can easily make a living through looks alone, as a model or entertainer. At +5, the character would be as comely as the top models, beauty pageant contestants, and movie stars in the world. On the other hand, at –1 or –2, the person has homely features, unsightly blemishes, or scars. At –3 or –4, the character's features are downright repulsive. At –5, people are taken aback by the character's appearance; looking at him is a source of discomfort. Beings with inhuman features can have levels as low as –10.

Basic ESP

0-point Paranormal Quality

Almost all humans have an innate connection to Seepage and can call upon five rudimentary psychic abilities (Hunch, Intuition, Ken, Read Aura, and Second Sight). These abilities are discussed in detail in **Chapter Five: Paranormal** (p. 188). If the character purchases or gains the Psychic Burnout, Psink, or Void Drawback, he loses his Basic ESP abilities in favor of the new disabilities. If the agent possesses full psychic powers, some supercede their Basic ESP counterparts.

Body Double

1-point Social Quality or Drawback

There is a true twin in the character's past, someone who looks exactly like the agent. In order to qualify for this Quality or Drawback, the "twin" must be involved somehow in the character's life or career, either for good (Quality) or for ill (Drawback). The twin is not always a relative, but can be someone who physically resembles the agent; the paranormal or alien science may be responsible.

Charisma

Variable Mental Quality or Drawback

This trait represents the personal magnetism and leadership qualities of the person, and can range from –5 to +5. Charisma may be added to any Task where the character is trying to influence other people. Negative Charisma, of course, reduces the chance that any attempt to influence people will work.

Clown
1-point Mental Drawback

This character refuses to take things seriously and is always coming up with jokes and wisecracks, even during the most inappropriate moments. Perhaps the character is deeply insecure and tries to gain other people's acceptance through humor, or he simply delights in keeping people off-balance with his comments.

Clowns are generally accepted and liked during situations where their quirky humor is not out of place (parties and other social gatherings, or among friends). Their sense of humor gets them in trouble during tense and dangerous situations. Also, people often do not take this person seriously even when they should.

Contact
Variable Social Quality

The character has friends or associates who can provide him with information, warnings, and even help, should he require it. The more helpful the contact is, the higher the Quality's point value. For any and all Contacts, the Chronicler determines whether he is available at any given time. Generally, the more time the character has to reach or get word to his Contact, the more likely the Contact is to come through.

A Contact who provides only rumors and hearsay is worth one point. If the person usually provides reliable information and will help the character out in small ways (offering a ride, letting the character spend the night at the Contact's apartment), this Quality is worth two points. Actual allies who help the character in any way they can are worth three points or more, depending on the Contact's resources.

Contacts within other governmental or private organizations (other than the agent's own) can give the agent access to their Profession's Pulling Strings. This connection does not provide the agent with any Influence, and any Influence Tasks required to access them suffer a –2 penalty. The Chronicler may increase the penalty if the agent requests access to the Contact's Pulling Strings more than twice per month.

Due to the varying levels of security and value of the Pulling Strings granted, the Contact Quality Cost List shows modifiers to the cost of the Contact for different agencies (if the agency is not listed, Pulling Strings access is never available). For example, a Contact usually worth two points (reliable) who also provides access to Pulling Strings from his DEA Profession, would cost four points. Contacts who do not provide Pulling String access cost the normal amount. The Chronicler should feel free to adjust these or create his own. Losing the Contact for any reason also severs the agent's ability to access the Contact's Pulling Strings.

Corrupted by the Supernatural
2-point per stage Paranormal Drawback

Prolonged or intense exposure to supernatural phenomena can corrupt a character's mind. Once a character has been corrupted by Seepage, he is slowly driven insane by his heightened sensitivity to this pervasive energy. Eventually, the individual succumbs entirely, becomes a focus for the energy of Seepage, and is removed from the player's control.

Contact Quality Modifier List

Agency	Quality Modifier
ATF	+2
BDS/BIR	+1
Bureau of Prisons	+1
CAPS	+2
CDC	+2
CIA	+3
CYGNET	+4
DEA	+2
DIA	+3
DTIC	+2
FBI	+2
ICE	+2
MKULTRA	+4
MOONDUST	+3
NASA	+3
OER	+1
Ranch	+4
RASPUTIN	+3
US Air Force	+1
US Army	+3
US Marshal Service	+2
US Navy	+1

The exact nature and manifestation of this corruption depend on the circumstances that caused it. Corruption can be caused by curses, possession by spirits, participation in occult rituals, or any number of other events. None of these situations need be voluntary. Details of Supernatural Corruption can be found in **Chapter Five: Paranormal** (see p. 202). The value of the Drawback depends upon the number of stages of Corruption completed.

Covetous
1- to 3-point Mental Drawback

A Covetous character wants certain things and is prepared to go to great lengths to acquire them. He may be motivated by love of money, lust for sensual satisfaction, hunger for power, or the search for glory. Whatever he desires, be it fame, fortune, or influence, he will do almost anything to get it, limited only by any sense of caution or morality he may have — and in some cases, not even by that. A Covetous character usually refrains from breaking his own moral code or the laws of the land in the pursuit of his goals, but if a golden opportunity presents itself, the temptation may be too great.

There are four types of covetousness, based on what the character wants: Greed (money and wealth), Lechery (sexually attractive people), Ambition (power and influence), and Conspicuousness (fame and renown). It is possible to covet two or more of those things, but each additional source of desire adds but a single point to the value of this Drawback.

The Covetous Drawback has three levels of severity.

Mild: The character knows what he wants, and he spends a great deal of time and effort to attain his goals, but he won't break his own rules or those of society to do so. His desire otherwise dominates his life, however. Most of his actions should be directed toward achieving his objective, directly or indirectly. This level is worth one point.

Serious: Presented with enough temptation, the character may succumb even if it goes against his better judgment or morality. He may resist if the action he contemplates is truly wrong and reprehensible — stealing the credit for a heroic deed performed by a friend, for example — but resisting requires a Simple Willpower Test, at a penalty of –1 to –3 if the temptation and possible rewards are great. This level is worth two points.

Extreme: This desire is so strong that it often overwhelms any scruples the character may have. When presented with temptation, he can avoid acting only by passing a Difficult Willpower Test, with penalties ranging from –1 to –5 depending on the size of the "prize." For a high enough reward, the character will turn on friends or loved ones, and even betray his cause or principles. This level is worth three points.

Dependent
2- or 3-point Social Drawback

The agent has a relative or someone who is close to him, creating a target for an enemy to exploit and a vulnerability the character will need to protect. A wife, child, elderly parent, or inquisitive journalist sister are good examples of a dependent. Increasing the number of dependents raises the value of the Drawback to three, no matter how many there are.

Disgraced
2-point Social Drawback

Reputation is everything, and the character has made an unforgivable mistake that has ruined his standing. Being responsible for the death of a colleague, abandoning a partner in the field, and even having a history of failure on missions are sample reasons. Generally this failure means that he suffers a –1 penalty on all Influence Tasks relating to the group from which he is disgraced. Further, those who know of the agent's failure react poorly to him in social situations.

Disloyal [Type]

Variable Social Quality or Drawback

It is the nature of conspiracies that disloyalty exists. Infiltrators are asked to perform simple tasks, such as passing on secret knowledge and membership names, and much harder things, such as helping others infiltrate, sabotaging the target organization, or even becoming a martyr for the cause. No one character can know exactly what he will be called upon to do; it all depends upon how influential he becomes in the target organization and what the needs of his core organization are at that time. Each character should choose an organization or Profession he is "loyal" to and one he is infiltrating. He should also decide on a type of infiltration as detailed below.

Spy: Exact circumstances of the espionage vary widely. The spy may have started working in the loyal organization and then was assigned to infiltrate the other. Or he may have always worked at the infiltrated organization and become disillusioned with it, selling out and changing his allegiance to the other, loyal, organization. Regardless of the situation, the character has access to the Pulling Strings of both groups, although calling upon the Pulling Strings of the loyal organization may endanger his cover (at the Chronicler's discretion). Thus, those Pulling Strings should be accessed only in the direst situations. Spy costs three points.

Double Agent: Some conspirators are loyal to no one but themselves. Each organization believes that the agent is loyal to it, but they are mistaken. Although all groups know the agent has contact with the others, he explains that he is feeding them false information – a dangerous and tense game, keeping both sides guessing about his value. Given the security risks, as soon as he loses his value, his life is almost always forfeit. The agent can work for more organizations than the spy, gaining access to the Pulling Strings from each, but this also multiplies the chances of being caught. Due to the difficulty of getting any of the groups to trust him, increasing the agent's Influence Quality (for any group) after character creation costs double. Double Agent is a four-point Quality.

Severed Ties: Sometimes an agent has to sever his connections to his organization or employer. He can still exert influence through contacts and favors, however. This applies only to non-Aegis governmental departments or agencies. Severed Ties is a two-point Drawback.

Traitor: The agent has been forced out due to disloyalty or having failed the department or agency. Normal organizations treat him with hostility; militant or criminal groups target him for harm. He may no longer use Pulling Strings that are specific to the agency he has left. Traitor is a three-point Drawback.

Emotional Problems

Variable Mental Drawback

Those with Emotional Problems react in unreasonable ways to certain situations and problems. The reaction can be anger, pain, or anguish, typically more extreme than normal. These emotional problems can be triggered by ordinary events in normal life, events that may bring distress to most people but prompt a very strong reaction from a disturbed character. Some emotional problems are discussed below.

A common theme in fiction involves characters who manage to overcome their flaws in the course of the plot. Emotional Problems can be overcome by characters during play, but this process should always be roleplayed. If the player was able to convey the inner struggle of his character over the course of several sessions, the Chronicler might allow him to eliminate the Drawback without having to "pay" any Experience Points.

Anger: This person has trouble managing his rage. He is prone to fly off the handle in relatively minor circumstances, and when truly aroused, he often reacts violently. This is a two-point Drawback.

Fear of Rejection: This person is afraid of rejection, and when he experiences rejection (or thinks he has been rejected), he feels hurt and angry. People with this problem may be afraid to make friends or approach people they are attracted to, and if their fears come true, they will harbor a great deal or resentment and anger. This is a one-point Drawback.

Depression: This character's emotional problems make the very act of living seem a chore. Common symptoms of depression include sleep problems (either oversleeping or bouts of insomnia), severe procrastination (to the point that the sufferer may lose his job), and a lack of interest in anything. A character with depression is at –1 to most Tasks and tends to avoid becoming involved in anything. This is a two-point Drawback. A severe shock may snap someone out of this state for a while (a life-threatening crisis will do it), but the character will sink back into inactivity afterward. Certain drugs and psychiatric treatment can reduce the effect of this problem (which will also reduce its value).

Emotional Dependency: These types tend to be "clingy" and overly dependent on others. Once they make a friend, they want to hang around him all the time. When involved in a relationship, they are excessively needy. This behavior tends to annoy people around them. This is a one-point Drawback.

Humorless: The humorless character lacks the ability to laugh at life and takes everything with the utmost seriousness. Other people's attempts at humor leave him cold or annoy him. This is a one-point Drawback.

Fear of Commitment: Whenever this character starts feeling too close to somebody, he becomes afraid and starts pulling back. Maybe he is afraid that if he lets somebody get too close, that person will hurt him, and it's not worth the pain. Perhaps he fears that if he reveals too much about himself, the other person will see the "real him" and will be appalled or disgusted. This makes it very difficult to have a healthy relationship with either friends or lovers. This is a one-point Drawback.

Fast Reaction Time

2-point Mental Quality

Unlike most people, who are easily surprised and blindsided, these quick individuals often anticipate their enemy's moves and counteract them. They almost never "freeze" in combat, contact sports, physical confrontations, and other dangerous situations, allowing them to act first without needing to check for initiative (if using a random initiative option, this Quality adds five to all rolls). The benefit should be restricted by common sense — Fast Reaction Time will not help the target of a sniper half a mile away, for example. This Quality also provides a bonus of +1 on Willpower Tests to resist fear.

Flashbacks

1- to 3-point Mental Drawback

The character is haunted by vivid flashbacks of some horrific event in his past. They occur suddenly, often triggered by a particular sight, smell, or sound, and completely overwhelm the agent. Luckily, the flashbacks seldom last more than a few moments. The player should consult with the Chronicler, defining the event from the past and the stimuli likely to trigger the flashback. When these stimuli are encountered, the agent must make a Fear Test or suffer the effects from the Fear Table as if he had encountered the original incident. The more common the trigger, the higher the value of the Drawback. Fear Test should be modified using double the Drawback value as a penalty (e.g., a two-point Drawback imposes a –4 penalty to Fear Tests). Characters with this Drawback often have the Sleep Disorders (Recurring Nightmares) Drawback.

Good/Bad Luck

1-point per level Paranormal Quality or Drawback

Each level of the Luck Quality counts as a +1 bonus (or –1 penalty) that can be applied to a Test or Task, once per game session. Multiple levels can be added together for a big bonus on one Test or Task, or spread around several different actions. For example, if a character has three levels of Good Luck, he can take a +3 bonus on one action, a +1 bonus to three actions, or a +2 bonus for one and a +1 bonus for another. Chroniclers may wish to limit the maximum number of levels of Luck a character may take.

With Good Luck, the player decides when it comes into play. Bad Luck, however, is in the hands of the Chronicler. Chroniclers should exercise caution and good judgment when applying Bad Luck. If they use Bad Luck for meaningless rolls, the Drawback becomes little more than a minor inconvenience. On the other hand, applying Bad Luck to Survival Tests or other critical rolls generates resentment among players. Make the Bad Luck count, but do not abuse the characters.

Lance has a two-point Bad Luck Drawback. At one point in the Story, Lance takes aim with his gun as a potential source attempts to flee the area. The character's mission will be much harder if the source escapes, but Lance is in no immediate danger, so the Chronicler tells Lance that a startled bird flies in front of him, spoiling his aim. A –2 penalty is applied to Lance's shot.

Good luck can be a great boon for Healing Luck (see p. 170).

Guardian Angel/Haunted

3-point Paranormal Quality or Drawback

If taken as a Quality, a benevolent supernatural spirit has attached itself to the character and is acting as the character's protector. The reason for such an "attachment" varies. The spirit could be that of a close relative who vowed to care for the character, or it could be the result of a spell or ritual. The agent need not even be aware of the reason for the spirit's strange affinity, or even of the existence of the spirit.

Regardless of the cause, the spirit attempts to help in situations that threaten the character's life. When such a situation occurs (the spirit does not manifest for insignificant dangers), the player may roll D10 and add the Seepage Level of the area. Success (a result of nine or higher) means the spirit manifests itself briefly to aid the character. One caveat, however – the forces of the supernatural are unpredictable, and if the result of the die is a one, the spirit turns hostile for a moment. The Chronicler may then use the spirit's powers to harm, rather than help, the character. In these cases, the spirit will most likely act indirectly, by drawing attention to the character.

The evil counterpart of Guardian Angel – Haunted – is when a malevolent spirit has attached itself to a character for the purpose of driving him mad. The purpose of the haunting is seldom the death of the victim, perhaps because the fiendish spirit would perish along with the host. The possible causes of a haunting are as varied as those of a Guardian Angel.

Whatever the source, the Haunting manifests in a similar way to the Guardian Angel. During any particularly dangerous or critical moment, the Chronicler rolls a die to determine whether the spirit will intervene. The Haunt is also subject to the same unpredictable change of heart, and if the result of the roll is a one, the spirit may consider the threat to the host too great and act to the agent's advantage.

Hard to Kill

1-point per level Physical Quality

Characters with this Quality can withstand an amazing amount of damage before going down. Even after being severely wounded, medical attention has a good chance of reviving them, scarred but alive. This Quality is bought in levels. Each level of Hard to Kill adds three Life Points to the character's Pool. Additionally, each level adds a +1 bonus to Survival Tests. Level five is the highest possible for human beings.

High/Slow Metabolism

1-point Physical Quality

A character with a high metabolism burns fuel at a much faster rate than most people. He is always restless and usually a little hyperactive, and never gains weight regardless of how much he eats. This excess energy gives the agent a +1 bonus on any roll that involves the character's reflexes or reactions (including initiative rolls if used). However, he must eat a full meal every three hours or suffer a –1 penalty on any roll that involves Willpower for every three hours he goes without eating. Because of the speed of his metabolism, drugs affect him twice as fast and wear off twice as quickly. This could be a help or a hindrance depending upon the circumstances.

Conversely, people with slow metabolisms use fuel extremely efficiently. They need very little food to sustain them and generally have a high endurance, but must constantly fight against becoming overweight. They need only one decent meal a day and gain an extra six points to their Endurance pool. Drugs take twice as long as usual to take effect, but last twice as long.

Honorable

1- to 3-point Mental Drawback

The honorable character follows a code of honor and will not break it lightly, if at all. The more restrictive and rigid the code is, the higher its value. In a life-or-death situation where honor must be ignored, the character might do so, but even then a Difficult Willpower Test is necessary to pass the psychological barriers reinforcing the code of honor. Players whose characters ignore honor for the sake of convenience should be penalized for poor roleplaying. This Drawback has three levels.

Mild: These characters do not lie or betray friends or loved ones, or people they respect. Anybody else, especially people from groups they dislike or are prejudiced against, are fair game. This is a one-point Drawback.

Serious: This code of honor is more complex and applies to everyone, friend or foe. The character always keeps his word and does his best to fulfill any promises he makes. He will not betray the trust of others once he has accepted it. Note that the character may be reluctant to give his word except in a good cause, because once it has been given he will abide by it. This is a two-point Drawback.

Extreme: This person lives by a strict set of rules that control most of his actions toward others. In addition to all the restrictions above, he refuses to participate in acts of betrayal such as ambushes, striking a helpless or unsuspecting foe, and cheating in any way. Lying is anathema, and he only lies in cases of extreme need. Even then, he feels guilty and reacts poorly; any tasks requiring lying suffer a –2 to –6 penalty, as determined by the Chronicler. This is a three-point Drawback.

Hyperlingual

2-point per level Mental Quality

The character has an uncanny aptitude for learning and speaking new languages, from the most mundane European tongues to the strangest dialects of jungle-dwelling tribesmen. He may add his level in the Hyperlingual Quality to any Language skill (even if it is zero) when determining level of fluency. For example, a character with Language (Swahili) 2 and three levels of Hyperlingual speaks Swahili with "complete mastery," a level of fluency normally associated with a skill level five. The Chronicler may impose limits dependent upon the agent's Intelligence if the player abuses this Quality, and should penalize heavily when interpreting alien languages.

Increased Essence Pool

1/5-point Paranormal Quality

1/2-point after character creation

While all human beings have Essence, the Talented generally have a greater amount. Having a large Essence Pool is both a blessing and a curse. While Essence can be used to affect the world in many ways, it also attracts the attention of evil and supernatural beings who feed on others' Essence.

Spending one point during character creation adds five points to the character's Essence Pool. This can be done multiple times. After character creation, adding two Essence points costs one experience point. This makes it more cost-effective to build up Essence when creating the character, representing the relatively slow improvement of the Talented character's gifts during the course of his life. Essence can be purchased after any game session where Essence was used, to indicate a strengthening of the character's spirit.

Any character with one or more paranormal Qualities can increase his Essence Pool using this Quality.

Influence [Type]

1-point per level Social Quality

Prerequisite: Two or more levels of Military Rank, Resources, or Status in any combination desired.

The character has connections and can make things happen. Dependent upon the type of Influence Quality the character possesses, this may be money, fame, military rank, or a favorable view from the government. At higher levels, this character can make or break careers or get away with murder. Powerful people return his calls and he is often able to get things done that would normally take weeks of red tape to accomplish, if at all. When an agent tries to use any of his Pulling Strings, the agent's Influence Quality is added to the Task needed to access the favor. The higher his Influence, the easier it is for him to get things done.

Either Military Rank, Resources, or Status (or a combination of all three) is necessary to garner significant levels of Influence. Influence level can never exceed one half of the character's combined levels in any of these areas, so to have an Influence 5, the character must have a minimum 10 Status levels, or six Resources and four Status levels, or four Status, three Military Rank, and three Resources, etc.

An agent's type of Influence Quality is usually defined by the character's Profession. They are Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law, Military, Paranormal, and Science & Research. In some cases, the character may hold some Influence through a secret organization, in which case he will have a second, covert Influence Quality of that organization's type. The character's standing within his own profession or neighborhood is always stronger. Influence is integral during cell creation.

Dora Saffron is an FBI agent. She therefore gains the Influence (Law) Quality as part of her Profession Package. Through her work, her Influence has increased to level three. She is also infiltrating an occult organization as part of a long-running undercover operation. She has been accepted by the occult group for some time now and has gained a second Influence Quality, this time in Paranormal. On her sheet, Saffron has Influence (Law) 3 and Influence (Paranormal) 1. Both of these Types of Influence are considered during cell creation.

The level of Influence may be added as a bonus to certain Tasks, such as Intimidation and Smooth Talking, if the Chronicler feels it is appropriate. This can depend upon the type of Influence, and such a bonus may be modified if the agent has a high Influence though not necessarily in the correct area. If an agent has more than one Influence Quality, the most suitable should be applied, not necessarily the highest.

Saffron tires to use her Influence to intimidate a suspected criminal; she adds her Law Influence to her Intimidate roll. If the suspect was part of the military and knew he could use his armed services record to avoid criminal prosecution, Saffron's Law Influence might still be used, but at only half its level (round down).

A description of the various levels of Influence follows:

Level One: Most of the Influence is localized, either to the character's professional or geographical area (if civilian). He can throw his weight around and get results, knowing wealthy or powerful people who will hear him out, albeit briefly. All Aegis agents should have at least this level of Influence due to their Professions' connections.

Level Two: The character can fix most legal problems with a few phone calls (up to minor felonies) and by greasing a few palms. When he calls other important people, they listen.

Level Three: At this level, the character stands at the center of a network of favors and obligations. He can almost get away with murder, but lesser crimes are certainly glossed over as long as they are not exposed publicly. His Influence extends over other powerful people who exert their own Influence on his behalf, provided he remembers the favor and reciprocates at a later date.

Level Four: The character can make or break anyone; if his connections are right he could have people killed and get away with it. Nobody refuses a call from him, and he is almost above the law, but not quite.

Level Five: Most people of this Influence level are not in the public eye. They can exert influence on every level.

Level Six+: These levels are reserved for heads of government departments, heads of Mafia families, and even Presidents or Royalty.

INFLUENCE AND THE UNISYSTEM

In *Conspiracy X,* the Influence Quality is limited to one sphere and can vary when compared to the prerequisite Qualities. It is possible to have a high-ranking military character who has relatively little Influence. This represents someone who worked his way up or was granted high rank as a favor but has not built much in the way of a web of connections.

Influence in *WitchCraft* was introduced in the *Abominations Codex*. The *WitchCraft* Quality is more general and not limited to a particular area of influence. This results in the *WitchCraft* version being more expensive to purchase.

MKULTRA Survivor

2-point Paranormal Drawback

The individual survived an experiment by the secret government agency MKULTRA. The agent remembers this time only vaguely, with partial memories of strange countries and laboratories buried deep beneath the ground. These flashes of memory are haunting at best and the character knows that at some point he will be killed, but by whom and why are impossible to tell. The character's greatest fear, however, is that the tests are not done – that someday he will wake up in a cold sweat and a month, a year, or longer will be missing from his memory.

Every year, the agent must roll a Simple Willpower Test. Failure imposes another mental Drawback (chosen by the Chronicler). The agent can gain numerous Drawbacks this way over the years. Suggested Drawbacks include Amnesia, Emotional Problems, Flashbacks, Psychological Problems, and Sleep Disorders (Recurring Nightmares). This Drawback cannot be taken by someone with a MKULTRA Profession.

Military Rank

Variable Social Quality or Drawback

The character has a rank in the armed forces. The value of Military Rank ranges from –1 to +9 and costs one point per level (positive or negative). Keep in mind that high rank also entails numerous duties that may restrict the character's actions even more than very low rank. The rank names in the table below are based on the main U.S. services; other nations have different names for equivalent ranks. Ranks for underground guerrilla operations are usually created by the self-appointed leader of the group and are rarely respected outside of it.

Rank Table

Level	Army	Marine Corps	Air Force	Navy/Coast Guard
–1	Private	Private	Airman	Seaman
0	Specialist	Corporal	Senior Airman	Petty Officer 3rd Class
1	Sergeant	Sergeant	Sergeant	Petty Officer 2nd Class
2	Sergeant 1st Class	Gunnery Sergeant	Master Sergeant	Chief Petty Officer
3	Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Lieutenant	Ensign
4	Captain	Captain	Captain	Lieutenant
5	Major	Major	Major	Lieutenant Commander
6	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander
7	Colonel	Colonel	Colonel	Captain
8	Major General	Major General	Major General	Rear Admiral
9	General	General	General	Admiral

Minority
1-point Social Drawback

A minority character is considered a second-class citizen because of race, ethnic group, or religion. He is a member of a small or disadvantaged group, disliked by the mainstream. People of the dominant group tend to act in negative ways toward him; many will be automatically suspicious, fearful, or annoyed at him for no reason other than what he is. This Drawback has a one-point value in a relatively progressive society (like the United States), where people cannot be legally denied service in a restaurant because of the color of their skin. The Chronicler may wish to increase this if he sets the game within a particularly prejudiced environment or time period.

Natural Toughness
2-point Physical Quality

The character is tougher than normal, capable of taking a punch without flinching. Tough characters have 4 points of Armor Value against blunt attacks, such as fists or baseball bats. Bullets and slashing attacks are unaffected by this Quality.

Nerves of Steel
3-point Mental Quality

A character with this Quality is almost impossible to scare. Whether he is too dumb or too tough to be frightened is open to question, but he can keep his cool even in the face of unspeakable horror. Only the most bizarre and terrifying situations make an impression on a fearless character, and even then he has a good chance of not succumbing to panic. The character must make Fear Tests only when confronted with the strangest supernatural manifestations, and gains a +4 bonus to his roll even then.

Notoriety
2-point Social Drawback

The character has attained some degree of fame within a certain group of people. This publicity is definitely unwanted, even if its cause reflects favorably on him. Whether it is for good or for ill, being easily recognized is not an ideal situation for someone who is operating within a covert conspiracy. The player should detail the event or situation that brought the character his fame and the type of people who are likely to recognize him. If the character is a Secret Service agent, he may be known among government officials or law enforcement for thwarting an attempt on the President's life. If he is an occultist, he may be recognized by viewers of a particular pseudo-news television program due to a flashy exposé on the occult. The Chronicler should approve this, of course. If the agent comes into contact with people who may recognize him, the Chronicler should make a Difficult Perception Test to determine if that happens.

Obligation
Variable Social Drawback

Some rights are accompanied by duties. An Obligation must be followed to various degrees and grants a number of points depending on the strictness of its dictates. Members of secret societies and special agencies (such as many government organizations) often have Obligations to their groups. Failure to fulfill one's duty can lead to trouble – demotion and/or loss of job, Influence, and Pulling Strings.

Mild: Obeying the basic precepts of the organization or creed and not betraying its members are the highlights here. This is worth no points. The character could refuse to fight and walk away at any time.

Serious: The Cast Member is routinely expected to risk himself for the organization and go above the basic precepts of the membership. A Serious Obligation is worth one point. Government agents usually have this type of Obligation.

Extreme: The welfare of the organization is placed above that of the agent. He is always on call and does not have time to pursue a normal job (unless it's a cover for the real assignment) or much of a personal life. The penalties for disobedience or selfishness are severe. This is worth two points. Military recruit has this level of Obligation.

Total: The Cast Member must be totally devoted to the group. He is even expected to die for the organization, should that be necessary. Missions are extremely hazardous, and he is constantly in danger of imprisonment, torture, or execution. This is worth three points. Agents privy to Aegis' closely guarded secrets have this level of Obligation.

Official Identity [Type]
Variable Social Quality

Some characters have more than one identity; some have had their identities erased. Some identities give a false impression about the character's job, age, background, status, or even existence. These are all covered by the Official Identity Quality.

Dead: The character's death was faked at some point, to recruit him into a secret project without raising suspicion, to protect him from hostile forces hunting him, or for some other reason. The records of the character's life before he "died" exist, but background checks reveal none of his post-mortem activities. If the agent "died" after joining his Profession, he loses access to his Pulling Strings and must exert his influence through contacts and favors. Dead is a three-point Quality.

False Identity: Only characters with criminal, espionage, or law enforcement connections are likely to have this Quality because convincing papers require access to good forgeries and computer records. Each False Identity grants a set of papers and records (birth certificate, Social Security number, credit rating) that pass all but the closest scrutiny. Most police organizations will be fooled by the fake identity; an all-out investigation by such agencies as the FBI or NSA would reveal the truth. Each fake identity costs two points. Note that less rigorous covers, such as when characters travel under aliases or create fake driver's licenses, do not require the purchase of this Quality.

No Records: All records of the character's prior life have been destroyed. Any background search, regardless of how thorough, turns up nothing. This is most often done for members of covert black operations teams to provide complete deniability of the individuals' actions. The CIA, DEA, NSA, Project MKULTRA, and Project Moondust are among the organizations that employ these untraceable agents. A character with No Records may not be employed by overt government agencies such as the CDC, NASA, the Secret Service, or Federal Marshals. Regardless of the reason for the erasure, a character with No Records has no identification, passport, Social Security number, credit cards, driver's license, or any other official records. To operate effectively in regular society for any length of time, he needs to purchase at least one fake identity. No Records is a three-point Quality.

Patsy
1- to 3-point Social Drawback

Due to unbreakable promises, a desire to repay an extreme favor, blackmail, or some other means, the agent has become someone else's lackey. Each mission, the Chronicler may, in the role of the master figure, make any kind of demand on the character, even asking for the outright betrayal of the agent's friends or cellmates. The agent must decide whether to do what is requested. The level of the Drawback (Mild, Serious, Extreme) reflects how detrimental these demands are. The Chronicler may suggest a Difficult Willpower Test (with a modifier equal to the value of the trait) to avoid what is demanded. Should the Chronicler ever decide that the hold over the agent is broken, the actual results depend upon the exact nature of the hold. Blackmail has greater negative aftereffects than the demands of a former lover.

Photographic Memory
2-point Mental Quality

Those with photographic memories have an uncanny ability to remember things. After reading a book, they can quote passages without missing a word, and they almost never forget anything. The Chronicler provides information that the character remembers whenever it is necessary. Also, characters with this Quality receive a +1 bonus on any skill where memorizing facts is useful; most scholastic skills fall under this category. Furthermore, any Tasks where memory can play a role gain a +1 to +3 bonus, at the Chronicler's discretion.

Physical Disability
Variable Physical Drawback

A disabled character may suffer from limb loss, spinal column damage, and any number of tragic impairments. The possibilities are discussed below.

Blind: The character cannot see. Blind people live relatively normal lives but Tests or Tasks that require visual capacity (like those that come up often on missions) are impossible. If some other sense is involved or may be substitution (usually touch), the character may roll Perception and Notice (with a bonus for any Acute Senses). If successful, he may attempt the activity but any roll suffers at least a –5 penalty. This is an eight-point Drawback.

Missing or Crippled Arm/Hand: The hand in question cannot be used to grab or hold objects. Any Test or Task requiring two hands is at a disadvantage (–3 or worse) or simply impossible. This is a two-point Drawback. A character with a prosthetic hand can overcome some of these problems, reducing the Drawback to one point in value.

Missing or Crippled Leg/Foot: The character is unable to walk or run normally. With the help of crutches or a cane, he can move at up to one third of his normal Speed. Hand-to-hand combat Tasks are at –2. This is a three-point Drawback. Prosthetics can reduce the penalties, increasing speed to up to half-normal and reducing combat penalties to –1. This reduces the Drawback value to two points.

Missing or Crippled Arms: Both arms are missing or crippled. The character cannot use any tools normally. Some people with this handicap have learned to use their feet with great skill to compensate for their loss. This is a four-point Drawback.

Missing or Crippled Legs: The character is unable to walk. Without the help of a wheelchair, the best he can do is crawl or roll on the ground. This is a four-point Drawback.

Quadriplegic: Either arms and legs are crippled or missing, or the character is paralyzed from the neck down. Almost all physical activities are impossible. A special wheelchair, operated with the neck or mouth, can help the character move around (if the unfortunate has access to such instruments). Someone must take care of all the basic needs of the character, from feeding to changing. This highly debilitating trait is an eight-point Drawback.

Psychic
5-point Paranormal Quality

While 99% of humanity possess psychic abilities in the form of Basic ESP, only a relatively small number of individuals demonstrate advanced psychic powers. Only characters recruited from certain backgrounds (e.g., Project MKULTRA, Project Rasputin, and CAPS) may take advanced psychic disciplines during character creation. It is possible for almost anyone to develop these powerful disciplines later in the game, however. Characters with the Psychic Void, Psychic Burnout, Supernatural Focus, or Psychic Sink traits may not purchase Psychic.

All psychics have the ability to perceive the presence of supernatural energies or creatures. By succeeding at a Simple Perception Test, a psychic can sense if a supernatural being is near and can detect strong flows of Seepage in an area or object. This sensing is not precise. It does not tell the character exactly what or who is emanating an excess of paranormal energies, although the greater the number of Success Levels of the Test, the more information the psychic gains.

The Psychic Quality is required for any character wishing to purchase a psychic power (see p. 190).

Psychic Burnout
2-point Paranormal Drawback

At one point in the character's life, he possessed psychic abilities. Tragically, that power was ripped from him by some disastrous event, making him a Psychic Burnout, a variation of a Psychic Void. This burnout could have been caused by an overdose of drugs (particularly the variety used by MKULTRA to enhance psychic powers), psychic trauma (such as contacting a powerfully psychic but hostile mind), physical trauma to the brain, or some other reason. Whatever the cause, the Psychic Burnout is irreversible and the ex-psychic must live with only a vague remembrance of the power he once knew. One mild advantage is gained through this tragedy, however. The former psychic still possesses the mental discipline that allows him to shield his thoughts from prying minds. Someone born a Void would never be able to develop that skill. The ability to shield his thoughts, paired with the usual difficulty "reading" a Void psychically, makes a burnout very difficult to affect with psychic powers. A character with this trait may not have Psychic, Supernatural Focus, Psychic Void, or Psychic Sink. He also loses his Basic ESP abilities.

Psychic Link
2-point Paranormal Quality

Certain people have strong psychic bonds to other individuals, which allow them to psychically target the linked person with abilities regardless of distance. Characters with a psychic link share a close emotional bond. Family members, particularly siblings (especially twins), partners, and couples, have demonstrated this psychic link. When a player chooses the Psychic Link Quality for his character, he must decide who the character is linked to and why. The other party involved often has a similar link, but not always. In relatively rare cases, an individual may have a link to several people (most often family members), so characters may have multiple psychic links. A character with Psychic Void, Psychic Burnout, or Psychic Sink may not have this trait.

Psychic Sink
4-point Paranormal Drawback

Within the already small population of Psychic Voids exists a group of individuals with even more uncommon abilities. In addition to all Void traits, these individuals actually drain the power of paranormal phenomena around them. Aegis parapsychologists label them Psychic Sinks, or Psinks for short.

Anyone attempting to use a psychic discipline or ESP ability near the Psink operates at a weaker strength and ability, and finds his Essence drained slightly. The powers of supernatural phenomena are reduced in the presence of a Psink as well. Even the supernatural powers of the Infused are reduced when a Psink is present. If a psychic or the psychic's target lies within

the range of multiple Psinks, the effects are cumulative! The draining effects of a Psink are covered in **Chapter Five: Paranormal** (see p. 195).

This Drawback may be purchased multiple times, increasing the effects of the Psink's draining abilities. For example, purchasing the Drawback twice (and gaining eight points) results in double the draining effects.

Psychic Void

3-point Paranormal Drawback

Often referred to as Voids, Psychic Voids make up the small percentage of human beings that possess absolutely no psychic potential and are completely incapable of extrasensory perception. These individuals are often loners who have difficulty relating to other humans on any level. Voids cannot use Basic ESP or develop advanced psychic disciplines, and are unable to perceive the more subtle supernatural phenomena, particularly Telepathic Illusions.

Psychics find it difficult to "read" or affect Voids with psychic abilities such as Clairvoyance and Telepathy. Whenever a psychic attempts to target a Void with any psychic ability or ESP, the Strength of the discipline being used is effectively reduced by one.

Psychological Problems (Type)

Variable Mental Drawback

The agent has mental problems, ranging from the mildly delusional to the dangerously hostile. Almost any psychological condition can be taken as part of this Drawback. Some of the most common are listed.

Believer: Whether from personal experience, observation, or logical deduction, the character sees the paranormal's influence in almost everything – the recent power outages, his partner's guessing the right winning team, etc. He isn't gullible, just really anxious to see the unusual in every situation. The Cast Member must pass a Difficult Willpower Test to avoid assuming a paranormal explanation for any situation which is currently unexplainable.

Cowardice: A cowardly character is easily scared and intimidated. He may fight if necessary, but usually tries to stack the odds in his favor before resorting to violence. He would have no compunction (except as determined by other Drawbacks) against attacking others if circumstances minimized the danger. A coward can hide his Drawback from others very easily, as long as he is not involved in a situation that is clearly dangerous. Only then may his limitations become apparent. Use the value of this Drawback as a penalty to any Fear Test.

Cruelty: Cruel people enjoy making others suffer. The truly evil derive satisfaction from anybody's pain. Some people are perfectly normal and nice most of the time, but when angered or given offense, make their enemies pay – and love doing it.

Delusions of Grandeur: This person thinks he is far greater and more powerful than he really is. In extreme cases, the character thinks that he is a historical or mythological figure such as Napoleon or Sherlock Holmes. The more common type has an exaggerated sense of overconfidence. Some examples: "I am a genius, but nobody understands me – which is why the best job I've held is cashier at a 7-11" (Mild); "I am the Messiah; prepare for the Second Coming!" (Extreme).

Laziness: This character does not like to work and is always looking for ways to avoid it. A lazy character should roleplay an unwillingness to work, always seeking to shirk his duties or select the easiest task. More importantly, the character has a hard time learning skills due to his inability to spend the required time and effort. Skills are purchased normally until their level is equal to the Attribute most commonly associated with them. Combat and physical skills would be linked to Dexterity, technical and scholastic skills would be associated with Intelligence, and so on. After reaching that level, any further improvement costs half (round up) again as much (Mild), twice as much (Serious), or three times as much (Extreme). Lazy people are unlikely ever to excel at anything.

Lazy Claudia is a near-genius-level woman (Intelligence 4) with Serious Laziness. She could have been a great computer programmer but has instead settled for being a very good one. Claudia's Computer Programming skill can be bought up to level four in the normal manner. After level four, however, the cost to raise the skill is doubled. It takes 10 points to raise the skill to level five, and 12 points to raise to level six! Indeed, Claudia never goes beyond level four, too lazy to transcend this limit.

Obsession: A particular person or task dominates the character's life, to the exclusion of most other things. To pursue his obsession, he will go to almost any lengths (as limited by his morality). He may neglect other duties, both personal and professional, to pursue that which fascinates him. The obsession may be a person (who may or may not be aware of his feelings, but who almost certainly is upset about their intensity) or a task (such as getting revenge on somebody or performing some important or notorious feat).

Paranoia: "They" are out to get you. Trust no one. Everything is a conspiracy, everyone is keeping secrets. This character never knows when somebody is going to turn against him. A paranoid character expects treachery at every turn and rarely trusts even his friends and relatives. Note that in the world of *Conspiracy X*, where secret organizations have run centuries-old conspiracies, being paranoid is somewhat healthy. Still, a character with this Drawback sees conspiracies and danger everywhere, including places where there are none. This makes his stories and opinions less likely to be believed, even when they are true. Paranoid characters often suffer from other Psychological or Emotional Problems (their point values are determined separately).

Phobia: A phobia is an irrational fear of something. For example, Mild Claustrophobia would make a character uncomfortable in enclosed spaces; Extreme Claustrophobia would make the character unable to enter an elevator without suffering an anxiety attack.

Prejudice: The belief that a group of people (racial, ethnic, or national) has certain characteristics (positive or negative). While everyone has some prejudices, a delusional person staunchly holds to these beliefs. In some cases, the person refuses to trust or befriend any member of such a group, regardless of the merits of the individual person. Mild Prejudice would make the character an "Archie Bunker" type bigot; Extreme Prejudice describes a rabid white supremacist, unable to communicate with people of the wrong color.

Recklessness: A reckless character is supremely overconfident and impulsive, willing to take incredible risks, often without thinking of the consequences. Most of the time, he never looks before he leaps – and gets into all kinds of trouble as a result. He says what's on his mind with no consideration for diplomacy or courtesy, rushes into dangerous situations, and rarely wastes time on second thoughts. Reckless does not necessarily mean suicidal, though. Acting on impulse no doubt puts the character in jeopardy, but doing something that is clearly lethal is not roleplaying, it's just stupid.

Weird Delusions: Any strange belief that flies in the face of reality. Some examples are "Aliens talk to me through my wristwatch;" "Dogs are the Spawn of Satan, and must be destroyed." The value depends more on what the character does about the Delusion than about the Delusion itself. A Mild dog-hater refuses to pet dogs and avoids being next to them. A Serious dog-hater tells people about his beliefs all the time and keeps pestering any dog-owning friends and neighbors about the dangers of keeping such monsters around. An Extreme dog-hater carries his insanity to its "logical" conclusion and starts hurting or killing dogs.

Zealot: A zealot is a person whose beliefs (political, religious, or personal) are so strong that they dominate his life and behavior. Zealots are willing to sacrifice anything, including their lives (or the lives of others) in service to the ideals they hold dear. These characters are dangerous to themselves and others, and show a total disregard for the law whenever the law conflicts with their beliefs. The Chronicler dictates whether this Drawback may be taken at the lower levels.

The higher the value of the Psychological Problem, the more debilitating it is. Generally, Cast Members should not have Psychological Problems worth more than two points. A Chronicler should require Willpower or other rolls to avoid acting in accordance with a Psychological Problem. Such rolls should be modified by a penalty at least equal to the value of the trait.

Mild: The problem is controllable and the agent seldom allows it to affect him during times of crisis, especially when friends and loved ones are involved. People may not even know something is wrong with the character. This is a one-point Drawback.

Serious: The problem is severe and affects the character's daily life. Anybody who knows the agent realizes or strongly suspects that something is wrong. This is a two-point Drawback.

Extreme: The character is clearly deranged, with no regard for such considerations as the law or the safety of others. This does not mean the character is completely insane. He may control himself out of fear of being stopped or discovered by the law. This is a three-point Drawback.

Pulling String [Type]

Variable Social Quality

An agent who knows the right person can extend his influence outside his Profession. Through the use of an associate, friend, relative, lover, or even blackmail, the agent can use a single Pulling String from another agency as if it were his own. The cost varies per Pulling String, and some are not available outside Professions. Characters who seek access to more than one Pulling String through the same person should use the Contact Quality. Pulling Strings and the costs for purchasing them as separate Qualities are listed on pp. 80-101.

Resistance/Vulnerability

1-point per level Physical Quality or Drawback

Some people are innately better at ignoring the bad things that life throws at them. Others are particularly susceptible. Each type of Resistance or Vulnerability must be purchased separately. Some examples are discussed.

For Resistance (Disease), the Quality level is added to Constitution when resisting Contagion Strength. For Resistance (Poison), the Quality level adds to any Constitution Test required and decreases the damage caused per Turn (to a minimum of one). It could also be viewed as an "iron-clad stomach" and offer protection against eating bad or "off" food. Resistance (Fatigue) decreases any Endurance Point loss by its level (to a minimum of one point per time period involved). A Resistance (Pain) Quality would decrease the penalties associated with severe wounds and add to Consciousness Tests, though this would not affect Survival Tests. The Hard to Kill Quality covers that.

Those vulnerable to certain stimuli may have a "weak stomach", particularly susceptible to catching colds, or are easily exhausted. The Vulnerability Drawback is the opposite of the Resistance Quality – all bonuses become penalties for any Tests or Tasks.

Resources

Two-point per level Social Quality or Drawback

The character's level of Resources determines how much material wealth he has access to. Some levels are described below.

Destitute: Owns the clothes on his back, maybe ten dollars' worth of stuff, a shopping cart, and no money. Lucky to scrounge a few dollars a month. This is a 10-point Drawback.

Miserable: Owns about $100 worth of property (including the clothes on his back). May live in public housing, or might be homeless. Lucky to scrounge $100 a month. This is an eight-point Drawback.

Poor: Owns some $500 in property and lives in low-income housing. Has an income of $500 a month or what he gets from welfare. This is a six-point Drawback.

Hurting: Owns about $1,000 in property and lives in a small apartment in a bad part of town. Has an income of about $1,000 a month before taxes. This is a four-point Drawback.

Below Average: Owns $5,000 in property (including an old vehicle, perhaps) and lives in an apartment. Has a pretax income of $1,500 a month. This is a two-point Drawback.

Average: Owns $15,000 in property. Has an income of $2,500 a month before taxes. This is worth no points.

Middle Class: Owns $50,000 in property (will usually include a house or condominium, not to mention vehicles). Has an income of $5,000 a month before taxes. This is a two-point Quality.

Well-off: Owns $300,000 in property. Has an income of $10,000 a month before taxes. This is a four-point Quality.

Wealthy: Owns $700,000 in property. Has an income of $40,000 a month. This is a six-point Quality.

Rich: Owns $2 million in property. Has an income of $50,000 a month. This is an eight-point Quality.

Multimillionaire: Owns $5 million in property. Has an income of $200,000 a month. This is a 10-point Quality.

Each additional level adds another $5 million in property, $200,000 to monthly income, and two points to the cost.

Secret
1- to 3-point Social Drawback

There exists a dangerous and hidden fact about the character. The more damaging the secret if it became known, the higher the value of the Drawback. For example, damage to one's reputation and livelihood would be worth one point (Mild); a threat to the person's well-being (he might be arrested or deported if the truth were known) is worth two points (Serious); if the secret could cost the character his life, it is worth three points (Extreme).

Situational Awareness
2-point Mental Quality

The observant almost always know what is going on around them and can react with uncanny quickness to the unexpected. These characters gain a +2 bonus to any Perception-based rolls to sense trouble or danger in the immediate surroundings. It is very hard to sneak up on them; the same bonus applies to resist any Stealth Tasks to approach them.

Sleep Disorders (Type)
Variable Mental Quality or Drawback

The character's sleep patterns are abnormal in some way. Below are some suggestions for Sleep Disorders, although Chroniclers and players may wish to devise their own.

Deep Sleeper: The agent falls quickly into REM sleep and is extremely difficult to awaken. Anything short of physical damage has little chance of stopping the character from sleeping a full uninterrupted eight hours. When aroused prematurely, he remains groggy and any roll suffers a –1 penalty until he slept for a full eight hours, after which he will awaken normally without prompting. This is a two-point Drawback.

Insomnia: The character has trouble getting to sleep at night. He typically suffers from sleepless nights, making him grouchy and distracted. Every night the agent must make a Difficult Willpower Test to get a good night's sleep. If he does not, he loses D4(2) Endurance Points, and all actions the following day suffer a –1 penalty. This is cumulative until the agent gets a satisfactory night's sleep. People going without sleep for extended periods are subject to hallucinations, paranoia, physical cramps, and possible susceptibility to paranormal occurrences. Insomnia is a three-point Drawback.

Light Sleeper: The opposite of Deep Sleeper, the slightest noise or disturbance wakes the agent, who is instantly alert and aware of his surroundings. This may mean that he has a fitful or unsatisfactory sleep, but it is very difficult to surprise him. Chroniclers may wish to penalize Endurance Points if sleep is constantly interrupted. This is a two-point Quality.

Recurring Nightmares: This character is plagued by terrifying dreams that relive some traumatic experience, or are just frightening and disturbing. Every night, the Chronicler may check to see if the character suffers from the nightmare. This may be done at the Chronicler's discretion or may be rolled randomly (a roll of one on a D10 means the character experiences a nightmare that night). On any night when the character is afflicted by the nightmare, he loses D4(2) Endurance Points as the result of his inability to go back to sleep. This is a one-point Drawback.

Status
1-point per level Social Quality or Drawback

This trait represents the standing of the character in the eyes of the people around him. It includes any fame, glory, or notoriety the character might have. Note that wealth and status are often linked; a character gains a bonus to his Status equal to one-quarter his Resources cost (if positive). If zero level is middle-class American, then –5 is a homeless person and +10 is a member of an ancient noble house, a movie megastar, or the hero of millions.

Supernatural Focus
5-point Paranormal Drawback

Some people possess a strange and rare link to the supernatural world. These individuals somehow focus the energy of psychic Seepage into the immediate area, greatly increasing the likelihood and power of supernatural manifestations. It is quite possible that the Focus has seen a ghost at some point, and may have been witness to some of the stranger aspects of the supernatural, such as fish falls or perspective-warping vortices. Sometimes the presence of the Focus is enough to provoke a supernatural manifestation in and of itself. Such "random" manifestations may work to the Focus' advantage or may be dangerous, even lethal. More information on Supernatural Foci can be found in **Chapter Five: Paranormal** (p. 197).

This Drawback may be purchased multiple times, increasing the effects of the Foci's provocations. For example, purchasing the Drawback twice (gaining 10 points) results in increased Seepage, bigger manifestations, and more bizarre occurrences. Characters with the Psychic Void, Psychic Sink, Psychic Burnout, or Psychic Qualities may not be Supernatural Foci.

Talentless
2-point Mental Drawback

A talentless character has a –3 penalty when trying to do anything artistic. This penalty does not affect Tasks where other people's art is judged; many expert critics are talentless. Furthermore, the character can never have more than one Success Level in artistic pursuits, regardless of how high his skill or roll is. People with this Drawback also make poor liars, charmers, and social butterflies. The same penalty applies to such skills as Intimidation, Seduction, and Smooth Talking – a lack of creativity affects the ability to influence others.

PULLING STRING LIST

Accomplices
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

With a few calls to the right people, the character can obtain help of the less-than-reputable kind. An Intelligence and Streetwise Task enables the character to call on the skills of a criminal specialist in one area, such as safecracker, cat burglar, art forger, etc. The specialist arrives within D6(3) days and works on a single job. If the services are needed in a rush, the time can be shortened to D6(3) hours at a –2 penalty to the Task. Less skilled accomplices who can hold guns or look menacing require no roll. Five unskilled thugs arrive in D6(3) hours and work for one day. Asking these "gentlemen" to arrive within an hour requires a Task and imposed a –2 penalty.

Criminals are open to bribes, and offering D10(5) x $1,000 for the specialist or D10(5) x $100 for the thugs improves all rolls by +2. Doubling this bribe gains a +4 benefit, and quadrupling it results in a +6 bonus. Each accomplice who has been caught or killed in the last month results in a –2 penalty to any subsequent roll. Keeping the specialist for an additional job or the thugs for an additional day requires an additional Task, rolled at the end of the first job (specialist) or day (thug). Each additional job/day requires another roll, with a cumulative –2 penalty. For example, at the end of the second job, a –4 penalty is applied to keep the specialist on for a third job.

Aircraft Support
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Pilots, as well as aircraft maintenance personnel, keep tabs on where they might be able to obtain repairs or complete small modifications on aircraft. As a consequence, they often network with friends to obtain access to a workshop. To work relatively undisturbed in a Poor quality aircraft workshop requires no roll. Two Success Levels in an Intelligence and Piloting Task provides access to a Good workshop; three Success Levels upgrades that to Excellent. An Intelligence and Piloting Task also grants access to a private hanger. More than two Success Levels on this roll provides access to a private runway, so takeoffs and landings can be held in secret.

Alien Technology
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: MOONDUST or Ranch Profession

Whether from the capture of an alien, recovered wreckage, or some alien "feeding" technology from the shadows, Aegis has a small stockpile of specialized items. The items available vary and only one request can be made per week using a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. The item is lent for a "mission" or a period of testing depending on the reason for the request. If another request is made, the Task suffers a –3 penalty per outstanding item.

The modifiers to be applied to the roll requesting such items should be determined by the Chronicler depending on the importance of the item and the demands on that item. An alien skullcap that acts as a warning device might have a +2 bonus to the roll, but a silent psychic spaceship would suffer a –6 penalty to the roll or worse.

Delivery time depends on how far from the item storage place the character is at the time of request. If in the same town or city, the item is delivered or dropped off in an hour. Delivery within the same country is 24 hours (or less if the Chronicler feels it could arrive more quickly). Transport to another country takes two days, and the Task suffers a –2 penalty.

Damaged, destroyed, lost, or absconded devices result in a visit by some very dangerous internal security operatives. They will ask pointed questions regarding the device. Unless they are completely satisfied with the character's answer, the character loses access to this Pulling String for D6(3) months, and may suffer a permanent reduction of his Influence Quality (by means best left unmentioned; the reduction depends on the importance of the item).

Arrest Powers
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement)

The character has the ability to detain almost any person. While flimsy or trumped-up charges will be dismissed in due course, the character can hold a person for at least D6 x 4(12) hours. This time may extend much longer if there is some evidence that the person is guilty of the charges he is brought in on. To hold someone for more than one hour, the character must succeed at a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. This roll is modified inversely by the target's Influence Quality. For example, if the target has Influence 1, the penalty is –1. Some have Pulling Strings or very good lawyers that can have the charges dropped quickly, but even these individuals must still spend a minimum of four hours in custody while the necessary paperwork is completed.

Asset Forfeiture
1-point Pulling String

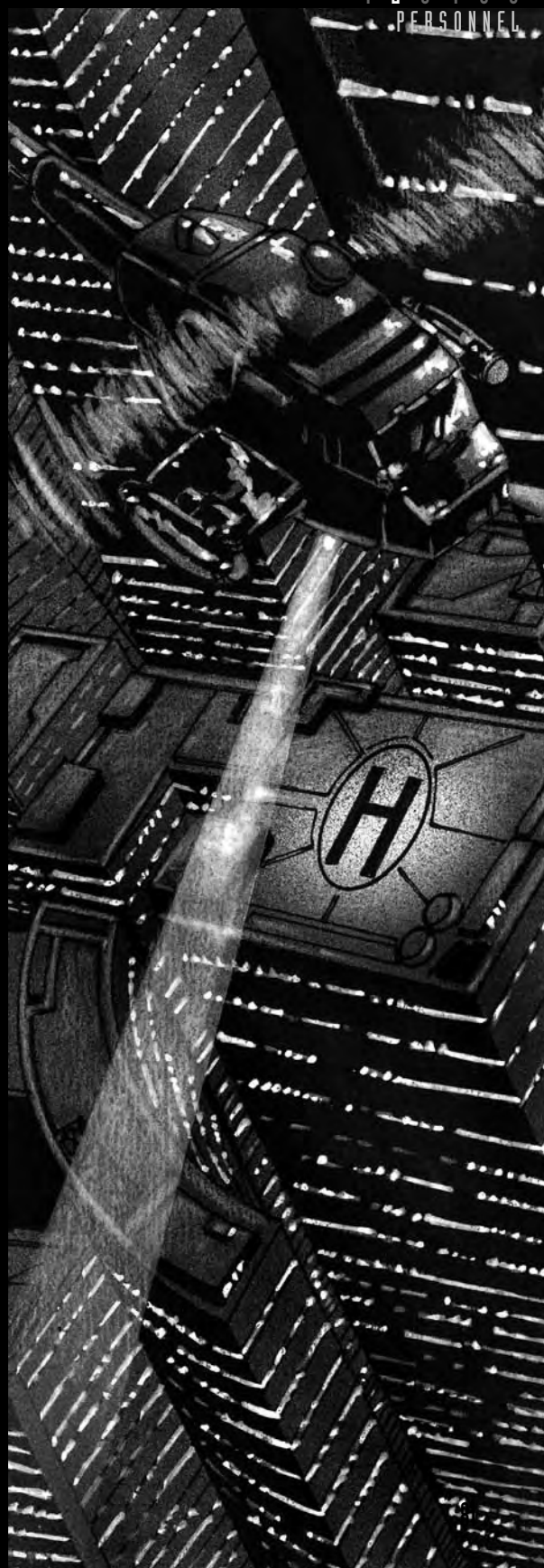
Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement)

Financial and asset forfeiture activity is an integral part of law enforcement. Many different agencies confiscate materials that are determined to be a tool for, or the proceeds of, illegal activities such as drug trafficking, organized crime, and money laundering. Either through their own organization or an auction house, many of these items are sold back to the community, although some do "disappear" before ever making it to the auction block or evidence lockers. With this Pulling String, characters may gain access to items that require the Criminal sphere of Influence. All items' costs are modified by –1 RP, down to a minimum of one RP. Items that already cost one RP are doubled in quantity instead.

Attorney
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement)

In the course of their missions, characters are sometimes called upon to perform actions of questionable legality. A few of these operatives have the misfortune of getting caught. Being able to call upon a good attorney is key to minimizing the repercussions of these breaches of law. With access to top-notch lawyers, judges sympathetic to the "needs" of the group, or the right amount of bribes and blackmail, getting through these tough times becomes easier. A successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task supplies the character with a good lawyer for any matter that does not involve significant threats to the security of the secret organization. For more serious cases, the Task has a –2 penalty.



If the character has really "screwed the pooch," passing the Task with a –4 penalty may get the case assigned to a "friendly" judge and dismissed for one or more technical reasons in D6 x 2(6) months. In the meantime, the character is advised to tread cautiously. Any organization is very reluctant to use its judicial resources in this manner. It is left up to the Chronicler's discretion as to the availability of federal judges even if the Task is made. If the "friendly" judge is used, it is likely the organization will be unable to use this ability again for some time, and as a consequence, the character's effective Influence is reduced by one permanently.

Back-up
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

The police are already on patrol all over the city – one phone call brings them running. Knowing the codes the police use can assure that at least two squad cars arrive within D6 + 10(13) minutes. If the individual making the call is part of a federal law-enforcement agency, this request will be seen as standard procedure, as long as there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate the call was warranted. Individuals with ties to the local police department do not have to answer any questions from their back-up. Others will probably be questioned on their jurisdiction and what they are doing in town.

Base Clearance
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

Military-related personnel gain access to military facilities much more easily than civilians do. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is required, modified by the accessibility of the base. For access to the nonpublic areas of a recruiting office or a Reserves base, the Task gains a +2 bonus. To enter any base with normal security, there are no bonuses or penalties. High-security bases and weapons testing sites incur a –1 penalty. To get inside the Pentagon or other areas of high security, including secret bases, suffers a –3 penalty or more at the Chronicler's discretion.

"Blanket" Wiretaps
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

The NSA is exempt from the federal law prohibiting unauthorized domestic wiretaps and usually maintains a huge number of active taps. These taps are generally related to national defense, but can range pretty far afield. With a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, the character can call on the NSA to monitor a group of phone lines for specific information. For example, all phones in a particular town or metropolitan neighborhood could be monitored for a particular person's voice. Or all calls into or out of a specific company's offices (throughout the country) could be watched for mention of "Flight 815." The blanket wiretap can be set up in D6 x 2(6) hours, and the taps can be left in place for up to one week.

BLUE FLY Transport
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: MOONDUST Profession

MOONDUST/BLUE FLY specializes in stealth insertion and extraction. A BLUE FLY transport can be called to arrive at the caller's location in six hours without a roll. Response time may be shortened, requiring a suitable Willpower and Bureaucracy Task at the Chronicler's discretion. Success results in the transport arriving at a continental U.S. location within an hour. For other locations, a penalty is applied to a similar Task equal to half the number of time-zones away from the continental U.S. For example, a drop/pickup in France would apply a –2 modifier (four time-zones away from the east coast of the U.S.). Travel is by jet, which should be taken into account when calculating travel times. Insertion is via parachute drop and pick-up is by stealth helicopter, so the team had better be prepared.

Border Control [choose country]
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

Most countries are very serious about monitoring their borders. The need to prevent illegal aliens, terrorists, and drug smugglers from entering has grown exponentially, especially within the past decade. With the right contacts in a specific country, getting in and out is as simple as finding the location of border patrols or scheduling them to "forget" to patrol a specific location at a designated time. Finding out where the border patrols will be in a specific 24-hour period in the next week is a Perception and Bureaucracy Task. To get the patrol not to cover a certain area for a four-hour window is a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Countries with high security (e.g., Italy, Germany, Algeria, South Africa, China, and most countries in the Middle East) incur a –2 penalty to all Tasks. This Pulling String pertains to only one country, and the player should identify which one each time it is granted or purchased.

CDC Labs
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

The Centers for Disease Control laboratory and medical facilities in Atlanta are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Samples sent from field operatives receive biological, medical, toxicological, and virological testing and analysis, and the results are returned within a week. No roll is necessary. The testing time may be expedited with a successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task (one Success Level = 84 hours, two Success Levels = 42 hours, three Success Levels = 21 hours, four Success

Levels = 10 hours). If the substance or item under analysis is alien, supernatural, or "unknown," the answer is received in six weeks and may not be conclusive. Again, testing time may be shortened (one Success Level = three weeks, two Success Levels = 10 days, three Success Levels = five days, four Success Levels = 60 hours). All analysis times may be halved (round down) if the characters can devise a convincing explanation that an outbreak has begun or is suspected.

CEASEFIRE
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Military, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

The CEASEFIRE program allows local police to match projectiles and shell casings recovered in seemingly unrelated occurrences. As an element of this program, the ATF utilizes a unique ballistic comparison system known as the Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS). This system enables firearms technicians to digitize and automatically sort bullet and shell casing markings. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task grants the character access to this system. If the gun has been used since 1995 in a crime where a bullet was left behind, the character must pass a Perception and Research/Investigation Task (–2 for a major city, +2 for a small rural town) to see if it is in the system. If it is in the system, the character can learn where, when, and how the gun was used and who used it in the incident on record.

Cheaper Vehicles
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Being a driver or pilot, or knowing one who can do the "shopping" for the character, reduces the cost of all vehicles by two RP. While characters with any Influence Quality type may purchase this Pulling String, the vehicles available are limited by the sphere of Influence used. For example, a character in the Navy would find watercraft cheaper, whereas most agents with law-enforcement Professions would find automobiles of all varieties cheaper. The Chronicler has the final say on which type of vehicle is more accessible to the character.

Chemical Stores
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Either by working in a hospital or pharmacy or by having a contact in one of those places, the character can obtain medications with few questions asked. Any over-the-counter drug may be secured without a roll. For harder-to-access supplies, a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task must be made, with modifiers depending upon the type of medication requested. Any prescription drug has a bonus of +2, a roll without modifiers obtains any illegal drug that has medical uses, and a –2 penalty is required for any other illegal drug. Psi drugs cannot be obtained. One vial of the drug is secured (or some volume about that size). If more than a single vial is needed, a –2 penalty is applied for each additional vial requested. Drugs are available in D6 x 3(9) hours, or D6(3) hours at –2 to the Task. If this Pulling String is used more than once a month, each additional use suffers a –2 penalty.

Chop Shops
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal or Law Enforcement)

Give the character a day and just about any vehicle, commercial or private, can be acquired and modified to taste. Cabs, ambulances, delivery vehicles, armored cars, police cruisers, boats, and planes are all possible. Any type of vehicle that can be purchased through the Criminal type of Influence can be had at three fewer RP, to a minimum of one RP. A vehicle may also be converted (from painting to armor plating to customization) in 6 – (Influence Quality) days, to a minimum of one day.

CIA Caches
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

Reportedly, the CIA set up more than two thousand secret equipment caches overseas between 1950 and 1978. Although many of these have been recovered, some still exist. The character can attempt an Intelligence and Research/Investigation Task to unearth information leading to the location of an arms cache with D10(5) RP of military or surveillance gear. This cache is nearby but well hidden, and takes D6 x 2(6) hours to open up. The equipment is well stored, and, while old, is workable. With two or more Success Levels, the character can gain information leading to a facility of up to D6 x 3(9) RP, which can then be cleaned up and used as a base for up to a month before the local authorities begin to ask questions. If the Task dice roll is one, the cache has already been cleared out.

CIA Maps
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

The CIA uses people and satellites to map the world in excruciating detail. Censored versions of these maps are released to the public. This character has access to the "uncensored" maps of the world without a Task. For maps with secret military and sensitive installations marked, a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task must be passed. Areas that do not "exist" can be located with a –2 penalty to the Task. All maps arrive in a week. Each –2 penalty applied to the Task reduces the time delay by half (round up).

CIA Training Facilities
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

The CIA runs a number of training centers in Virginia. At "Blue-U" in Arlington, tradecraft skills such as breaking and entering, disguise, photography, and certain cryptographic sciences are taught. The Warrenton Training Center teaches communications and signals intelligence training and is home to the CIA's secure communication network. Camp Peary or "The Farm" is where paramilitary techniques are taught. Demolitions, heavy weapons, and jungle warfare training are provided at a base in North Carolina. The CIA also runs paramilitary training bases out of Guatemala for underwater demolitions skills and in other nations throughout the world for other clandestine skills. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task (each additional Success Level allows the agent to be joined by one of his cellmates) must be made for the character to receive a week's intensive instruction in any one Hand Weapon, Gun, Language, Survival, or Stealth skill. The training facility acts as an instructor (see Instruction skill, p. 106), with Intelligence 4 and Instruction 5. The facility can give instruction up to level five. One week of intensive instruction gives the agent 30 hours of training, equivalent to 3 sessions of Instruction. Experience gained in this way must be spent on the skill instructed.

City Hall Archives
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Science & Research)

In musty storerooms and old offices of city and town government buildings, plans and blueprints may be found. These documents show detailed floor plans as well as electrical, plumbing, heating/cooling, and ventilation systems. Some municipality records are kept in better shape than others, and some officials are more helpful than others. Also, the older the building is the less likely that records exist for it. While certain buildings such as correctional facilities are exempt from public disclosure, buildings such as banks and stores are not. In all circumstances, the local government in the area where the building is located must be contacted.

For buildings constructed since 1980 federal and state laws guarantee that the records exist. No roll is needed to gain access to these records. Buildings constructed from 1960–1979 are less extensively recorded. The existence and condition of blueprints depends on when the appropriate city instituted fire safety laws regarding building plans. On a roll of three or less on D10, no records exist; four to seven means the records are there but in bad condition; eight or more means the records are well preserved. If the building was constructed from 1920–1959, records exist only if nine or more is rolled, and the records will not be in the best of condition. Before 1920, records exist only if the building is historical or important (Chronicler's discretion). Such records may be stored in another location, such as a museum or a private collection.

Regardless of the age of the building, the municipal clerk may call the building owner to ask permission to release blueprints. To avoid this "courtesy call," a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is required (add a +2 bonus for public buildings). High-security buildings, such as correctional facilities, may be unavailable (Chronicler's discretion) or at least require –2 on the Task to avoid the courtesy call.

Codebreaker Supercomputer
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

One of the NSA's most prized acquisitions is a giant supercomputing facility in a remote corner of the Arizona desert. The custom-built supercomputers housed at the facility are designed specifically to break codes and computer passwords as quickly as possible. Even the most secure encryption or password schemes in use today can usually be broken in a matter of hours by these computers. Access to the facility is highly restricted. Logging onto the system via telecommunications link requires an Intelligence and Computers Task. Any Computer Hacking Tasks performed while connected to the "codebreaker" supercomputer gain a +3 bonus and take only one quarter of the usual time.

Computer Security Database
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

Codebreaking and electronic security (particularly circumventing electronic security) are the lifeblood of the NSA. The NSA provides security procedures and recommendations for the rest of the government and the U.S. military. Its people know computer security; they wrote the book, quite literally. The NSA computer security manual is the hacker's bible, and the agency maintains a constantly updated database of security holes and weaknesses for internal use only. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task and a telecommunications connection allow the character to access the agency's database. This grants a +3 bonus on any Computer Hacking Tasks, and cuts the time by half (round up). NSA Professions may combine this Pulling String with the "Codebreaker" Supercomputer (with separate Tasks) and gain +6 on Computer Hacking rolls, but the time is only quartered.

Corruption Camp
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

Corruption Camps are intensive encounter groups intended to strengthen the body against corruption. Once a month a request can be made to attend one of these camps. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, with a –2 penalty per four extra personnel brought along, entitles the character to one complete week. As a result of the bolstering there, the next roll against Corruption gains a +2 bonus.

Corruption Treatment
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

Aegis' CAPS facilities have created a program for treating corruption. Gaining access to the treatment program requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. The subject must be brought to the proper facility and left there during treatment. Over time, the parapsychologists and occultists identify and expunge successive stages of corruption. Each stage removed requires the subject to endure three months of treatment and succeed at a Difficult Willpower Test. The treatment cannot remove the Corrupted by Supernatural Drawback, however.

Decreasing the time between rolls to one month is possible, but that intensive level of retreat is likely to leave its mark. The player must select a mental Drawback worth at least two points, and the character does not gain any points for doing so.

The cure is not perfect. If the person ever again fails a Corruption roll, all of the previous Corruption stages return, and a new level is gained.

Counterculture Friends [choose a country]
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Intelligence)

There are many subcultures around the world — the Black Panthers, the environmentalists, the Goth scene, and computer hackers to name a few. With this Pulling String, it takes D6(3) days to find a contact with the right knowledge in whatever country is chosen. To reduce the time to find a contact to D10(5) hours, an Intelligence and Streetwise Task is required. The roll only grants the character access to someone who is willing to help. The contact may want some compensation for his time, determined by the Chronicler and by what the character is asking.

Counterintelligence Files
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

The FBI's counterintelligence division maintains files on every U.S. government official with any security clearance whatsoever and conducts regular surveillance of these individuals every few years to ensure they are not double agents. They also maintain surveillance of foreign dignitaries and foreign-born residents of the United States. As such, their files are quite extensive and useful. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task grants full access to the filing system.

Criminal Resources
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal)

Because the character has a number of underworld connections, RP spent on Influence (Criminal)-prerequisite resources count double. For example, two RP would translate into four RP when purchasing such items. Items that the Chronicler feels are extremely rare are typically not available, no matter what their cost. Any time the character attempts to generate RP, a dice roll of one means that the local police have been tipped off. The ramifications of that slip-up are left to the Chronicler.

Criminal Tracking
1-point Pulling String

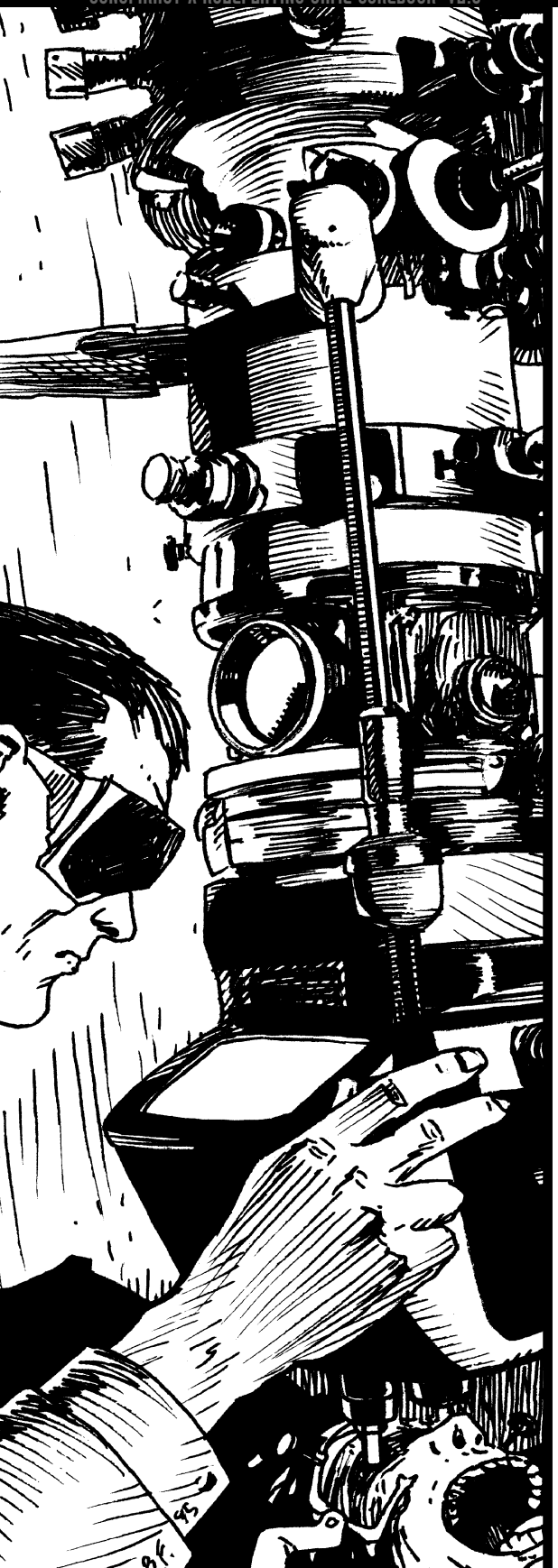
Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

The character can access dozens of databases on criminal activity as well as standard documentation, such as rap sheets. If he has a legitimate reason, such as working on a case connected to the search, a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is needed. If not, a –2 penalty is imposed, and a –3 penalty if he does not want any evidence of the search left behind. This allows access to licenses, gun permits, housing permits, criminal records, fingerprinting, credit card tracing, and other forms of background information. Some information may not be available. For example, accessing a fingerprinting database will be futile if the subject under investigation has no fingerprint record. The Chronicler determines what evidence is available.

Customs Analysis
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: ICE or USSS Profession

Customs scientists conduct a wide range of analyses to ensure that imported and exported merchandise has been properly identified. A successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task gains a full analysis of a piece of known technology, material, or substance. The results are returned in a week. Higher Success Levels halve the testing time (two Success Levels = 84 hours, three Success Levels = 42 hours, four Success Levels = 21 hours, five Success Levels = 10 hours). If the substance or item under analysis is alien, supernatural, or "unknown," the answer is received in six weeks and may not be conclusive. Again, higher Success Levels decrease testing time (two = three weeks, three = 10 days, four = five days, five = 56 hours).



Dangerous Toxins

2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Working with state and federal agencies, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) seeks to prevent exposure to hazardous substances from waste sites. The agency conducts public health assessments, health studies, surveillance activities, and health education training in communities around waste sites on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Priorities List. ATSDR has also developed toxicological profiles of hazardous chemicals found at these sites. The character can obtain a profile of any known hazardous material without a roll within 24 hours. Further, a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task (with a penalty equal to the Strength level of the toxin) secures a single vial. These materials may not be effective on alien or supernatural physiology, although with sufficient study and time they may be modified to be.

Dangerous Virus

2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

As the primary caretaker and researcher of viruses, CDC labs are veritable stockpiles of the most dangerous viral enemies of humankind. The character may gain a profile of any known virus without a roll. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task supplies a sample of a dangerous virus, and a similar Task with a –2 penalty gains access to a deadly virus. These materials may not be effective on alien or supernatural physiology, although with sufficient study and time they might be modified to be.

DARPA Labs

2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence: USAF, US Army, DIA, DTIC, NSA or US Navy Profession

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) serves as the central research and development organization of the DOD and is primarily responsible for maintaining U.S. technological superiority. The DARPA pursues imaginative and innovative research and development projects with significant military application. Characters with research questions can gain access to DARPA labs, databases, and personnel on a strictly top-secret basis. This aid generally results in increased and faster breakthroughs. All research projects (see p. 161) using DARPA facilities gain a +2 for purposes of the breakthrough test, while the modifiers remain the same for the associated skill Task. This Pulling String can be purchased only by DOD Professions.

DNA Database
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Science & Research)

The Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) contains DNA profiles derived from crime scene investigations and from individuals convicted of crimes. CODIS enables state and local law-enforcement crime laboratories to exchange and compare DNA profiles electronically. CODIS officially began as a pilot project in 1990, but this history is a fiction for public dissemination. Secretly, CODIS has been operating for more than 30 years, and the FBI has secured innumerable blood samples from hospital patients, newborn babies, and other sources. CODIS is installed across the nation and has a database of tens of millions of individuals. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task grants the character access to the system. If the sample is not from someone with a criminal record since 1990, any Research/Investigation Task using the system suffers a –5 penalty .

Ear to the Ground
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence: (Civilian)

This enables a character to learn various details about a country's or region's political or economic situation. A successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task reveals major political information or details on the economic situation known to the public. Additional Success Levels reveals more information such as names of aides, financial backing, and the names of the key figures who are running the show (if they are not apparent to the public). Very high Task results may gain secret or blackmailable data about these VIPs. The character gains this information within (10 – Success Levels) hours.

Experimental Psi Drugs
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

Over the years, MKULTRA scientists and other researchers have developed a battery of designer drugs that augment psychic powers. Each year, the developers increase the potency and duration of these drugs and seek ways to minimize their side effects. The job is not done – all of the psi drugs still retain some form of unpleasant and sometimes lethal side effects.

The character has immediate access to supplies of psi drugs. The first vial requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, and each additional vial requested in the same week imposes a –2 penalty. Delivery time is dependent on the distance from an Aegis psychic facility or other storage facility. If within a state or two, delivery time is D6 x 2(6) hours. Delivery anywhere else within the United States is up to 24 hours (D6 x 4(12) or Chronicler's call). Delivery to another country imposes a –2 penalty to the request Task and the length of time is D6 x 2(6) days. Each vial contains enough psi drugs for six doses. Psi drugs are covered briefly in **Chapter Six: Classified** and in depth in the *Paranormal Sourcebook*.

FBI Forensic Laboratory Analysis
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

The FBI has one of the largest and most comprehensive crime laboratories in the world. It is the only full-service federal forensic laboratory. A scientific analysis of a normal-priority sample can be gained without a Task in seven days. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task secures a sample priority treatment, returning the analysis within 24 hours.

Fingerprinting
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

The Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS) provides state-of-the-art fingerprint identification and criminal history data services, and dramatically improves the support services that the FBI provides to federal, state, and local law-enforcement and criminal-justice agencies. An Intelligence and Research/Investigation Task locates any U.S. citizen who has a previous criminal record or law-enforcement background. A penalty of –4 or more is applied if searching for a United States citizen who has no criminal record (the fingerprints may have been taken for some other reason and included in the database), or any individual from a country with diplomatic relations with the United States if such a person has a criminal record. A foreign national with no criminal record may be identified only after applying a penalty of –8 or more.

Front Page News
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian)

A connection with a journalist grants the ability to push news stories to the forefront, and conversely to help bury stories in the paper. The story must be somewhat factual, otherwise the journalist runs the risk of losing his reputation or job. That does not mean, however, that the story can't be altered slightly to "correct" certain misstatements or "refocus" the piece. Pushing a newsworthy item (but not necessarily true story) even further into the spotlight requires no roll. A Willpower and Smooth Talking Task with a +2 bonus is required to push a marginally newsworthy item. An unmodified Task is required to push a remotely believable story to front-page news, and the same Task with a –2 penalty is required to push an unbelievable or apparently impossible story to the forefront. In order to bury a story, reverse the difficulty modifiers, with burying a newsworthy story suffering a –2 penalty and burying an impossible and unbelievable story needing no roll. If the story is not factual or at least does not have the major points covered with "facts," it can come back to haunt the character.

Funding

1-point per level Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

The character can gain access to money from his Profession. This money can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from bribes to lodging to new equipment. Money is siphoned through a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. A character with Funding 1 gains $1,000 with no roll once a month. An unmodified Task gains a character ten times that amount per month. If the character desires a different amount, each $1,000 above or below $10,000 applies a –1 or +1 modifier. If desired, the character can attempt to cover his paper trail better by applying a –1 or greater penalty. This penalty is also applied to any Investigation/Research Task that attempts to trace the character's financial maneuvering.

For each level of Funding Pulling String, $1,000 is added to the "no roll" amount, $10,000 to the base unmodified roll amount, and $1,000 to each increment of modifier. Thus, someone with Funding 3 gains $3,000 without a roll or $30,000 with a successful unmodified roll. Each –1 or +1 modifier applied increases or decreases the $30,000 amount by $3,000. The following table summarizes.

Funding Level	Base Amount	Modifier (+/–1)
1	$10,000	$1,000
2	$20,000	$2,000
3	$30,000	$3,000
4	$40,000	$4,000
etc.		

On a Task dice roll of one, someone noticed the financial shenanigans, and that may lead to an investigation. Note that Funding is different from the Resources Quality. Funding is used purely for missions or investigations – professional use. Resources are the agent's private funds for personal or conspiratorial use.

Governmental Access

1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Secret Service Profession

Doors that were previously locked are often opened for friends who have powerful politicians to assist them. On a successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, the character can arrange a fact-finding tour to any legal or public area for up to six people, within D6(3) days. With three or more Success Levels faster access (within D6 x 2(6) hours) is provided. A –2 modifier is applied for access to restricted areas; –5 for highly restricted areas, equipment, or files. The target is notified beforehand and will have performed as much damage control as possible before the inspection arrives. Finally, applying a –4 modifier to any of these tasks allows the group to leave with "physical evidence," such as photos and small portable objects, although the members of any group that has been so "inspected" will probably be pretty angry.

Grants

2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Paranormal, or Science & Research)

Every scientific endeavor must be funded, and grants are a good way to obtain ready cash. When a research project has some merit to a funding organization, the requesting character may receive a grant. Once every six months, the operative can make a grant check with a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. If successful, he receives 20 RP worth of resources that can be spent on labs/workshops, staff, and/or equipment related to specific research, expeditions, or other related science projects. Every grant comes with $10,000 in disposable income. If no useful results are forthcoming to the granting organization over the next few months, the equipment will be repossessed, staff will stop receiving salaries and leave, and lab space will be torn down and returned to the grantor. If results are forthcoming or partially reveal new technology, the character can make an additional grant request every six months until the project has reached its conclusion or the flow of useful information stops. If results lead to breakthroughs in new technology, new sciences (such as nanotechnology), or proof of alien existence, all resources may be retained by the character.

Hidden Cures

1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

The CDC has discovered several effective treatment protocols for the most dangerous biohazard agents. These cures are kept in special vaults deep inside USAMRID. A character with this Pulling String may attempt to get his hands on one of these cures. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task secures one vial, and there is no chance of getting another for three months regardless of success or failure. Failure results in an investigation by the CDC and possibly anti-terrorism agencies. The cures are panimmunity factors – they work on the most dangerous biohazards, but are hideously difficult to manufacture without major lab work and months of development time. A single dose stops the progress of any illness unless the patient rolls a one on a D10. A single vial of the panimmunity factor would be worth a fortune, and if it became public that the character or his friends possessed it, any number of groups would come hunting for them very quickly. No one could allow a story like this to break, and any attempt to tell the press would lead to a firestorm of intrigue and strike teams from friend and foe alike.

Intel File
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

With various connections in intelligence, law enforcement, and media agencies, information can be found on a subject/target that was investigated at some point. No roll is required to reveal information that is available in the news, while a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task reveals information that would require interviewing the friends and associates of the subject/target. Higher Success Levels uncover more information. Two Success Levels reveal criminal background information, along with known contacts of the subject, typical hangouts, patterns of living, close friends, and personal information. Three Success Levels reveal all information that has been collected on the subject/target through legal means and any information that is classified. Finally, four or more levels reveal all information collected using any means possible. Much of this latter information would not be admissible in a court of law (it may have been gathered through paranormal means), but the agencies holding it knew the true value of it and so hoarded the data anyway. It takes D6 x 4(12) days to get the information. Reducing the time to D6 x 2(6) days applies a –2 penalty to the Task roll; D6(3) days incurs a –4 penalty.

Intelligence Agency Control
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

The office of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) coordinates activities within the intelligence community. Characters with this Pulling String may divert or cancel minor projects with no roll, and major projects with a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. The Chronicler may impose a modifier of +3 to –3 depending upon how the character explains this to his peers and superiors.

Laboratory/Workshop
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

A character can gain access to a laboratory or workshop of any particular type. No roll is required for a Poor Quality workspace. One Success Level on a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task grants access to an Normal workspace, two levels a Good Quality one, three levels an Excellent one, and four or more Success Levels a Superb one. The character has access to the place for one week. Each additional week requires a repeat of the Task roll. Each workspace is dedicated to a single field; obtaining a place with multiple fields incurs a –2 penalty per additional field. Of course, using the workspace can draw the

attention of other workers in the area. Private use adds an additional –2 penalty and may require the character to work late in the evening or early in the morning. The Chronicler may decide that certain facilities are not available in the area (there are only so many particle accelerators in existence, for example).

Law Enforcement Personnel
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement)

Reliable information on any law-enforcement character, court employee, or prisoner can be retrieved without a roll. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task grants a personal interview with that person or unrestricted access to a federal facility at the character's convenience. Apply a –2 penalty for highly classified persons or places and a –4 penalty for people who aren't supposed to exist, such as witness relocation program beneficiaries. It takes (D6 x 3) + 24(33) hours to obtain the information, get access to a building, or set up a meeting with an individual. Each successive Success Level halves this amount of time (round up) (assuming the person or place is nearby).

Library
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence: (Paranormal) or (Research)

A character has unlimited access to a library of a general nature or one specific to an academic subject. A Normal quality library requires no roll. A single Success Level on a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task grants access to a Good quality library, two Success Levels an Excellent one, and three or more levels a Superb one. The character has access to the place for one week. Each additional week requires a new Task. Private use requires an additional –2 penalty and may require the character to work late in the evening or early in the morning. The Chronicler may decide that certain facilities are not available in the area.

Medical Support
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence: (Civilian) or (Research)

With access to dozens of top-notch medical and treatment centers around the county, medical supplies are easier to come by for this character. All medical facilities cost two RP less; any medical staff (doctor or lab assistants/nurses) are one RP cheaper; drugs and scientific and medical equipment are all one RP less; and any special vehicles that are medical in nature are three RP cheaper. An item that already costs one RP is doubled in quantity instead.

MHIC-EDOM
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: CAPS, MKULTRA, or RASPUTIN Profession

The character has access to a storehouse of some of these rare devices (see p. 227). To borrow one of them requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, and the device is lent out for only one week. Delivery time is dependent on how far from the item's storage area it must be taken. If in the same town or city, the device is delivered or dropped off in an hour. Delivery within the same country is 24 hours (or less if the Chronicler feels it could arrive more quickly). Delivery to another country applies a –2 penalty to the Task, and the arrival time is two days. Damaged, destroyed, lost, or absconded devices result in a visit from some very dangerous internal security operatives, and a possible loss of access to this Pulling String for D6(3) months or more (at the Chronicler's discretion).

Military Training Facilities
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

Some of the finest training and education facilities in the world are administered by or directly affiliated with the DOD. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task provides individuals with instruction, each additional Success Level allows the agent to be joined by one of his cellmates. The training lasts roughly a week, and the following skills can be trained: Acrobatics, Brawling, Climbing, Demolitions, Dodge, Driving, Guns (any), Hand Weapons (any modern), Mechanic, Piloting, Stealth, Survival, and Tracking. The training facility acts as an instructor (see Instruction skill, p. 106), with Intelligence 4 and Instruction 5. The facility can give instruction up to level five. One week of intensive instruction gives the agent 30 hours of training, equivalent to three sessions of instruction. Experience gained in this way must be spent on the skill instructed.

Mind Control Drugs
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

In secret, MKULTRA scientists have created a stable and effective series of mind-altering drugs. These drugs act quickly (within a few Turns) and may be administered through ingestion, contact, or injection. Although the primary effects are damaging enough, scientists have succeeded in eliminating all but the most insignificant side effects. A drugged person must make a Difficult Willpower Test with a penalty equal to the number of doses applied. If this roll fails, the victim suffers the effects of the particular drug for one hour per dose.

The character must succeed at a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task to secure four vials (six doses per vial) immediately. If additional vials are sought within a one-week period, apply a –2 penalty for each. Delivery time is dependent on how far from the nearest MKULTRA storage area the character is. If in the same town or city, the drugs are delivered or dropped off in an hour. Delivery within the same country is 24 hours (or less if the Chronicler feels it could get there more quickly). In another country, the request roll is penalized by –2 and the time is two days. The Chronicler and player can determine the exact drug effects, but all produce some mental Drawback, such as Amnesia, Emotional Problems, Flashbacks, Psychological Problems, Sleep Disorders, etc.

Mobility
1-point Pulling String

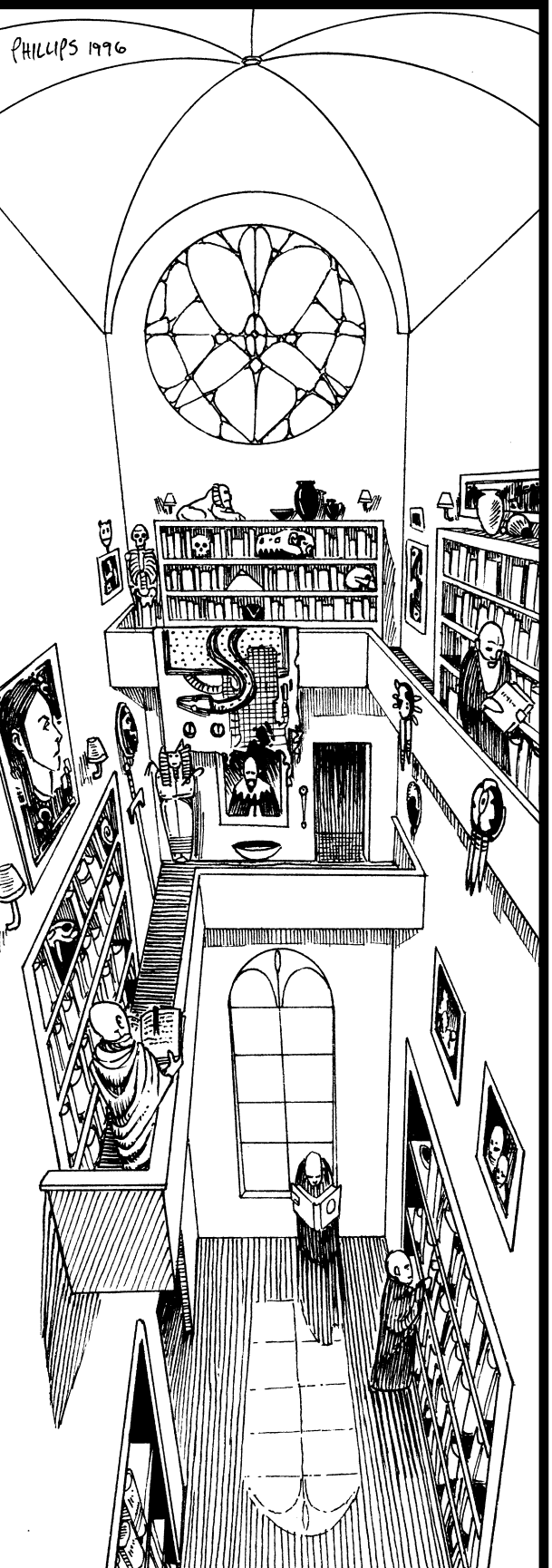
Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Military)

Using special travel connections, the character can go anywhere in the world. No roll is required for movement within the United States or its territories. Travel to an allied country requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task with a +2 modifier; travel to a non-allied country gains a +1 modifier. A –2 penalty (or a Task with a +2 if no roll is normally required) is applied if the character is bringing a team, or if the travelers are bringing more equipment than they can carry, such as vehicles, heavy weapons, or extra boxes of equipment. Using this "highway" of transportation is not difficult but is slow. From the point of securing transportation to the point of arrival is D6 + 2(5) days. Higher Success Levels reduce the time taken. Two Success Levels restructure priorities and reduce the time to (D6 x 4) + 24(36) hours. Three levels or more result in a travel time of (D6 x 2) + 12(18) hours, but the equipment and personnel must be ready and willing to make a parachute drop instead of landing and unloading.

NIMA Support
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

The National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) provides timely and accurate imagery, imagery intelligence, and geospatial information to the DOD. With the help of operatives in NIMA, the character can gain access to the best domestic and foreign maps. No roll is required for any general map of domestic areas. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is needed if the map desired includes service roads, trails, and detailed landmarks, or if it is to include geographical details located on private property. A –1 penalty is applied if a general map is required that covers a foreign country, –2 if the detailed equivalent is needed.



NMID Support
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

The National Maritime Intelligence Database (NMID) provides complete maritime information on harbors, imagery of coastal regions, maps of the sea bottom, etc. It encompasses all manner of maritime intelligence including naval, merchant marine, environmental, scientific, and technical information and can output data, images, signals, and acoustic recordings. Physically found at the National Maritime Intelligence Center (NMIC) in Suitland, Maryland, where it is maintained and updated, it can be used for online queries, regular updates on particular topics, and dissemination of essential information when required. A character can obtain a highly detailed map of any domestic oceanic or coastal area including all possible topographical information immediately without a roll. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is needed if the map desired includes foreign areas. A –2 penalty is applied if the map covers classified or secret domestic locations, –4 if classified foreign areas are requested.

News Archive
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian)

Every news outlet keeps a "morgue" of old stories, both those that were released and those that were not. The information may include videotape, confidential sources, still pictures, and evidence gathered by the original journalist. Accessing these archives requires no roll, but an Intelligence and Research/Investigation Task and 48 man-hours is needed to turn up useful information. Two Success Levels uncovers something in 24 man-hours; three Success Levels brings information to light in 12 man-hours. A failure results in no information or possibly some misleading information, at the Chronicler's discretion.

No Questions Asked
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: NSA Profession

The NSA is exempt from many federal laws, and this breeds an attitude among its staff that they are above the law. A few phone calls and a successful Willpower and Intimidation Task sidetrack or halt any governmental investigation into claimed NSA activities or projects within D6(3) hours.

No Trace
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

When necessary, certain military flights can be erased from existence. To have a flight removed from the logs and all other records, along with orders sent out to quiet those who worked the airfields, a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is necessary. A +2 modifier is applied for secret or stealth military aircraft, as less of their movements are recorded "officially." Any aircraft which was involved in an air incident (attack, near miss, or actual collision) is much harder to hide – a –2 penalty is applied.

Occult Library
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

A good occult library is invaluable to a ritualist. Access to a Normal quality library requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Success provides the character with books or personnel who can teach three to five different rituals (determined by the Chronicler). The higher the success, the better the facilities available. Two Success Levels grant access to a Good quality library (six to twelve rituals). An Excellent library requires three Success Levels and has between 13–18 rituals. Superb libraries require at least four Success Levels and have between 19–24 rituals. No one library has information on every known ritual.

Official Agendas
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Secret Service Profession

No roll is necessary for the character to acquire details of security measures, agendas, and travel routes for any lower-tier government official whom the Secret Service protects. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task must be made for a member of the Presidential cabinet or a former President and family, with a penalty of –2 for the President and Vice-President and their families. Two or more Success Levels allows the character to make minor security modifications, such as having himself stationed at a crucial point or making sure a particular building is overlooked by the advance team.

Personnel Tracking
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

The character knows how to navigate dozens of databases with public and not-so-public records. No roll is needed for legitimate work, such as working on a legal case that is connected to the search. Otherwise, an Intelligence and Research/Investigation Task is required. Two Success Levels or more are needed if he does not want any evidence of the search left behind. This allows access to licenses, gun permits, Social Security records, criminal records, fingerprints (for domestic criminal records only), credit card tracing, and other forms of information. Some data may not exist – for example, accessing a fingerprint database is futile if the subject under investigation has no fingerprint record. The Chronicler determines what information is available.

Pool Data
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

Some "magical institutions" keep records on the locations of Pools and Loci, and even what causes them to become agitated and when. Data can be accessed with a Willpower and Rituals Task; apply a penalty of –6 or more for information on a Locus. To learn when the location is agitated requires 3 or more Success Levels.

If the Task is successful, the source also provides a time when the area will not be in use in the next 24 hours. If the character calling on this Pulling String is willing to do a favor for the group giving the information, the initial roll gains a +2 bonus and the character is able to choose a time during which he will be granted exclusive access to the location. As only a certain number of magical institutions exist throughout the world, trying to find and contact one outside the character's base of operations is much harder (all Tasks suffer a –4 penalty).

Some Pools and Loci are shared or used by other groups. In this case, even if one group tells the location and plans not to be there so the character's group can use it, this does not mean other group(s) are as understanding. The Chronicler should adjudicate such situations.

Press Credentials
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian)

Press passes are available for many invite-only affairs. The difficulty of getting into the event depends upon how much attention the event is seeking. An event with great public exposure requires no roll (political party conventions, ribbon-cutting ceremonies). An event that has some celebrities and big-name attendees and/or seeks public exposure requires a Willpower and Smooth Talking Task (movie premiere, candidate fundraiser, auto show). A –1 penalty is imposed on the roll for an event with many celebrities and big-name attendees that wants coverage but does not want the media crawling all over (major candidate fundraiser, high-exposure sports event). An event that is publicly known but considered private would impose a –3 penalty (presidential party, House of Representatives caucus). All events that are unknown to the general public or that have closed attendance lists would impose a –6 penalty (private celebrity's or politician's party, Super Bowl). A –1 penalty is imposed per additional pass sought.

Project Oversight
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

Members of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) office have access to intelligence projects being run by all members of the U.S. intelligence community. To request dossiers on any current, past, or planned Confidential project requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Higher security classifications (Secret and Top Secret) impose –3 and –6 penalties respectively. This Pulling String also allows the character to control the budget and resources allocated to that project with a similar Task.

Psi Labs
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

The character can gain access to a laboratory that offers unique psionic research possibilities and state-of-the-art psychic equipment for accurate testing. Each lab has personnel who can help the character learn certain psi skills or develop his psi powers. The training facility acts as an instructor (see Instruction skill, p. 106), with Intelligence 4 and Instruction 5. The facility can give instruction up to level five. One week of intensive instruction gives the agent 30 hours of training, equivalent to three sessions of instruction. Experience gained in this way must be spent on increasing or learning the power instructed.

Psychotrons
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: RASPUTIN Profession

Psychotrons and psychotronics are applied psi engineering. Access to a Third Order psychotron requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Getting a Second Order psychotron imposes a –2 penalty to the Task; securing a rare First Order psychotron suffers a –6 penalty, if available at all. If in the same town or city, the device is delivered or dropped off in an hour. Delivery within the same country is 24 hours (or less if the Chronicler feels it could arrive more quickly). Delivery to another country imposes a –2 penalty to the Task, and the delivery time is D6 x 2(6) days. Damaged, destroyed, lost, or absconded devices result in a visit by internal security personnel and a temporary loss of access to this Pulling String (or permanent loss if a First Order psychotron was involved). Psychotrons are discussed briefly in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 228) and in depth in the *Paranormal Sourcebook*.

Quantico Training Facility
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: ATF, DEA, or FBI Profession

The FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia houses superior training facilities used by the FBI, the DEA, and other agencies. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task provides individuals with instruction at these facilities; each additional Success Level allows the agent to be joined by one of his cellmates. The training lasts roughly a week, and skills that can be trained are Acrobatics, Brawling, Climbing, Computers, Dodge, Driving, Electronic Surveillance, Guns (any), Hand Weapons (any modern), Research/Investigation, Stealth, Streetwise, and Tracking. The training facility acts as an instructor (see Instruction skill, p. 106), with Intelligence 4 and Instruction 5. The facility can give instruction up to level five. One week of intensive instruction gives the agent 30 hours of training, equivalent to three sessions of instruction. Experience gained in this way must be spent on the skill instructed.

Quarantine
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: CDC Profession

When CDC discovers an outbreak or potential outbreak of an infectious disease, it may send a team of doctors to quarantine the affected party or area for diagnosis and treatment. Local and state law-enforcement agencies and the National Guard enforce this quarantine, if necessary. The quarantine may last anywhere from 24 hours to a full week, dependent on the severity and lethality of the outbreak. Quarantining an individual or family requires no roll. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task quarantines an apartment, office building, or complex. Cordoning off a small town or neighborhood imposes a –2 penalty to the Task. A large town quarantine suffers a –4 penalty; an entire city, a –6 penalty. Any major cities would be impossible to quarantine absent Presidential authority and a national emergency. Imposing quarantine, particularly of a large area, is by no means a low-profile endeavor. Operatives using a quarantine to help cover up activities should be prepared for the inevitable media interest and publicity, as well as official inquiries by other government agencies.

Ranch Analysis
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: MOONDUST or Ranch Profession

The extensive Ranch laboratories and scientists/technicians are always on call to analyze alien technology or other materials. A scientific analysis of a piece of unknown technology, material, or substance can be gained in a week with a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Each additional Success Level halves (round up) the time this analysis would take. Whether the analysis produces any meaningful results is at the Chronicler's discretion.

Random Surveillance
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

The FBI's National Security Division undertakes random surveillance of U.S. citizens who are entrusted with security clearances of any kind. A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is required to launch a basic surveillance operation on a target. Chroniclers should apply penalties depending upon the target's Influence Quality, reflecting the difficulty of requesting surveillance on high-ranking individuals, or those with high security clearances. Full surveillance requires an additional Intelligence and Surveillance Task and includes full bugging of offices and home and round-the-clock video monitoring.

Safe House
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Various law-enforcement agencies, criminal organizations, and other groups maintain secure low-profile locations. To gain access to a safe house that has room for six people requires no roll. If no one is searching for the individuals, holding out at the safe house is only a matter of how long the "owner" allows; a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task at the beginning of each week ensures they can stay. If someone is searching, the comings and goings for food and supplies eventually draw notice. After D6 + 2(4) days, the Chronicler decides whether the safe house remains so. For locales where a safe house would be difficult to set up, such as busy office areas, open waterfronts, rural areas, or foreign lands, a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is required with a –2 penalty on the roll. On the other hand, traffic in and out is less noticeable, and the initial "safe" period is (D6 x 2) + 2(8) days. Setting up additional safe houses requires an additional Task for each.

Satellite Alexis
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: RASPUTIN Profession

The largest and most ambitious psychotron ever built is the Alexis satellite designed by Project RASPUTIN's greatest scientist, Dr. Tatyana Markova. Alexis is capable of various psychic abilities that can affect whole areas. Using a HERMES request, access to the satellite's capabilities requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. A visit to a RASPUTIN facility (scattered throughout the United States) applies a +2 bonus. Even if successful, on a roll of one or two on D10, the desired ability is unavailable. It takes about seven days to recharge the psychic batteries, and therefore the satellite cannot be used more than once each week. Successful access and proper charging allow the character to direct an astronaut to prepare the device and maneuver it into position. This takes a variable number of hours (D10 + 12(17)). The satellite remains in position for eight hours; a separate Task keeps it there an additional D6 x 2(6) hours, when it must be moved. When activated, the satellite affects everyone in an area from ten yards to one mile (chosen by character) in radius. Optionally, the character could schedule the satellite for one week in the future; this guarantees that the abil-

ity will be available and the satellite will be in position. This awards a +3 to the Task using HERMES, and +4 for visiting a RASPUTIN facility. Alexis' specific capacities are briefly discussed more in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 229) and in more depth in the *Paranormal Sourcebook*.

Satellite Surveillance: Communications
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

Spy satellites listen to cellular communications, TV and radio broadcasts, and any other form of communication that travels to and from other satellites. Communication satellites cannot monitor landlines or cordless phones that do not use satellites. They follow all important traffic around the globe, including major cities and military bases. To reposition one to a more limited or specific target requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task with a –2 modifier.

A communication satellite monitors all traffic coming in and out of its target area; the smaller the area, the more likely the computer or technician will be able to pick up a voice or phrase. An area like a warehouse would require a Perception and Electronics Surveillance Task to find any information (if relevant information exists). A Task involving a small city block would suffer a –2 penalty. A small village, military base, shopping mall, or any area equivalent to a small block, but having high communication traffic, imposes a –4 penalty. A town, industrial zone, or commercial zone of a city, a large military base, or something equivalent in size would carry a –6 penalty; a large city, a –8 penalty. A metropolis such as NYC would be impossible.

All communication surveillance can be directed to the characters if they have a satellite uplink for a live communication feed of the observed area. This is primarily used to listen in on the communications of a target.

Archives of communications are organized by the subject of the observation. Unless the character is researching something of past importance, his subject is not in the archives (Chronicler's discretion on whether it is "of past importance"). To search through declassified archives requires a Perception and Research/Investigation Task, older classified archives impose a –2 penalty, ongoing and recent transcripts or recorded data bring a –4 penalty. Most communications files cover a block or smaller area, usually a single building.

Satellite Surveillance: Intelligence
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

These satellites are the highest tech possible and have been available only since the late 1980s or early 1990s. They can focus on tiny details, down to the date on a penny. The satellites use a number of different sensors that simultaneously capture images in black and white, color, infrared, radar, and ultraviolet. This allows analysts to determine shape, density, temperature, movement, and chemical composition.

SATELLITE SURVEILLANCE

Satellites surround our Earth and monitor its surface. They roam the skies taking photos and listening everywhere; they look upon our lives with such detail that privacy is rapidly becoming something of the past. All these images are stored in computer storage banks the size of farms. The banks are housed in secret locations under the control of the intelligence agency of whatever country controls the satellite.

Gaining access to satellite records usually requires the character to physically visit the location in which records are stored. Recent records (the last 12 months) are stored at the main location of the agency or at one of its branches that is equipped to view the data. Records more than a year old are stored in archive facilities. To have the files shipped requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task and takes (D6 x 2) + 6(12) hours via courier in the same country. Shipping to a foreign country imposes a –2 penalty and takes (D6 x 2) + 12(18) hours. To have them sent through the Internet incurs an additional –2 penalty.

Time spent searching the files depends on the specificity of the information sought. The character can look through the data himself or can assign an operative from the intelligence agency to do it (at a risk of exposing the agent's intentions). Having someone else do the work requires an separate Willpower and Bureaucracy Task and adds D6(3) days to the delivery time (each additional Success Level halves this time, round up). A specific location on a specific day would require one hour or so to look through the photos, while a specific location for a period of months might take days to look through. Similarly, a broad section of the world such as Europe on a specific day would also require days to leaf through all the images. The Chronicler should decide the timeframe based on the information sought.

If searching for the specific voice of a known person who has been recorded, the job can be assigned to a computer and takes D6(3) days. Communications can be turned into transcripts and a computer can search them for specific phrases or patterns; this task takes D6(3) days. Communication searches can be focused on more precise locales than image searches, such as the communications being transmitted to and received by the occupants of a single building. Monitoring the communications of a small town would be considered a very large and complex search.

The subject matter of files varies. Archives during the Cold War from both the United States and the Soviet Union focus on each other, enemies of the countries, and major cities of any nation. Major events of the time such as wars, war games, peace conferences, intelligence operations, and so on would be covered. Archives of more recent surveillance follow the same lines, with expansion to major shipping lanes; ports, military bases, and capitals of enemies and allies alike; sporting events or any large gatherings of people likely to be struck by terrorist actions; airports; weather events; and natural disasters. Most photos focus on the military movements of enemies, known terrorist locations, and intelligence operations on foreign soil. Within its own territory, it is likely that a country's satellites focus on all major cities and military bases to watch or record any actions taken against them, along with any major event that takes place within the country. Most of these records are photographs going back to the late 1960s and limited video going back to the early 1990s. Communication surveillance is quite limited when searching back further than the late 1980s.

The detail of photos also varies. High-detail images cover objects such as vehicles, buildings, and equipment. Broadly detailed photos are of military bases, industrial parks, sea ports, and so on. The character may request a certain resolution, or the Chronicler may provide it. The detail in the photo provides a bonus to Research/Investigation Tasks according to the Photo Interpretation Bonus Table (but not all satellites can achieve all possible image area sizes). Of course, at a very fine resolution the important images may be outside the frame of the photo. Also, with broad resolution images, the subject must be large scale enough to be identifiable (*e.g.*, weather patterns, armada movements).

Photo Interpretation Bonus Table

High Detail	Broad Detail	Bonus
N/A	Regional	0
100 yds x 100 yds	100 miles x 100 miles	+1
50 yds x 50 yds	50 miles x 50 miles	+2
10 yds x 10 yds	10 miles x 10 miles	+3
1 yd x 1 yd	1 mile x 1 mile	+4

Having a satellite scheduled to observe a specific area usually requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. If it is an important area to the observing agency, it is observable in D6 x 10(30) minutes and is recorded for D6 + 6(9) hours. If the spot is not a priority, it takes D6(3) hours to reposition a satellite, and images are available for D10(5) hours before it needs to be moved back to its normal orbit. Additional Success Levels add an hour to the observation time.

Since these satellites are reserved only for special operations, their archives are very specific. They still view sites important to the observing agency, but focus on the main sections and persons in those areas. They are used to take photos of ongoing intelligence operations and to confirm results of those missions. During wartime, they pinpoint targets so that the military can make surgical strikes and special ops teams are not caught by surprise. The archives are organized by the subject of the photo; unless the character is researching something of past importance, his subject is not in the archives (Chronicler's discretion on whether it is "of past importance"). To search through declassified archives requires a Perception and Research/Investigation Task, classified but no longer active archives impose a –2 penalty, and classified images of ongoing importance a –4 penalty. Most images are five yards by five yards for high detail and five miles by five miles for broad detail. New photographs can be scheduled with a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task as often as every 10 seconds.

Satellite Surveillance: Standard
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Science & Research)

These photo archives date back to the late 1960s and continue through the present. Many countries now sell their satellite images and/or their archives to companies or individuals. Furthermore, private companies raise their own satellites into space for "special services" to anyone who pays. Gaining access to the archives or current images requires no roll. Archived photo resolution vary, but most high-detail photos are 50 yards by 50 yards (but can go down to 10 yards by 10 yards), and most broad-detail ones are 50 miles by 50 miles (but can go up to 100 miles by 100 miles).

Unless the subject desired was important to the observing agency (Chronicler's discretion on whether it is "important"), a Perception and Research/Investigation Task is necessary to find anything relevant. One Success Level means that a broad-detail photo was found. D10 x 10(50) sets the detail in miles. Two Success Levels or more means the spot was photographed in high detail. D10 x 10(50) determines the detail in yards.

Satellite Surveillance: Video
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence)

The most secret and rarest of spy satellites are equipped with video capabilities. These satellites record the movement of a nation's enemies, its own important government officials, and other events and places that are deemed important enough to be watched in detail. Available since the mid-1990s, these cameras are top-notch and can zoom in to get fine details in a one-yard by one-yard area. Because these satellites are generally focused on specific areas, repositioning requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task with a –2 penalty. If already positioned appropriately, no roll is necessary to direct live video feed from the positioned satellites to the characters (if they have a satellite uplink). This technique is used primarily to coordinate the activities of ground personnel and to track suspects.

The archives are organized by the subject of the observation. Unless the character is researching something of past importance, his subject is not in the archives (Chronicler's discretion on whether it is "of past importance"). To search through declassified archives requires a Perception and Research/Investigation Task, classified but no longer active archives imposes a –2 penalty, and ongoing and recent video a –4 modifier. Most images will be 10 yards by 10 yards for high detail and 10 miles by 10 miles for broad detail.

Search and Seizure
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

The character can arrange the search and seizure of any public or private area. If the search is essentially legal (reasonable suspicion of illegal activity can be shown), a successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task secures a warrant for an entire, or part of a, standard private home or small business. A –2 penalty is imposed to search all or any part of a large residence or company, and a –4 penalty for any part or the entirety of a corporate headquarters or major compound. There is a additional –1 penalty to the Task for areas that are not owned by American citizens, areas owned by illegal/quasilegal agencies, and illegal searches or searches without justification. If more than one of these situations exist, the penalties are cumulative. Finally, the level of publicity of the area or the search (no media, out in the woods, public approves of the search, massive media presence, etc.) may modify the Task at the Chronicler's discretion. Absent exceptional cause, law-enforcement agencies cannot move against military sites or federal property.

Secret SDI Gun Stars
3-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Military) or NASA Profession

The U.S. has placed two prototype killer satellites into orbit. These satellites are equipped with magnetic rail guns capable of destroying aircraft and missiles. The guns fire metal projectiles roughly the size and shape of hockey pucks. Few technicians in the military and at NASA are aware that the two satellites, designated GS *Fred* and GS *Ginger*, even exist.

A Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is required to ready either satellite for activation. Once prepped, the satellite remains in a state of readiness for eight hours before returning to its powered-down dormant state. The satellite also returns to the dormant state after it is fired. After the satellite has been assigned a target, a variable amount of time is needed for repositioning (D6 x 4(12) hours). Any vehicle, structure, or landmass may be targeted, but the satellite is unable to lock onto any-

thing smaller than a compact car. Once the target has been acquired, the satellite may malfunction (roll of one on D10). Otherwise, the satellite fires a projectile. The satellite's has Dexterity 2 and Guns (Rail Gun) 8. A –2 modifier is applied to any target smaller than a house, and a penalty is applied if the target is moving (–2 for an average car going 50mph to –6 for a flying jet fighter). Whatever is hit is destroyed.

Security Protocols
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian)

On a successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, the character can circumvent any other federal agency as long as some form of diplomatic threat can be reasonably foreseen (apply a –2 penalty if the target is a military agency). If the character needs extra support, he can actually requisition help from these federal agencies. Another Willpower and Bureaucracy Task (–2 again for a military agency) gains access to any nonclassified facility or property that the agency normally has use of. This loan lasts for no more than one week, and the material must be returned in good condition or an extensive internal investigation will be launched.

Sending Presidential Orders
1-point Pulling String

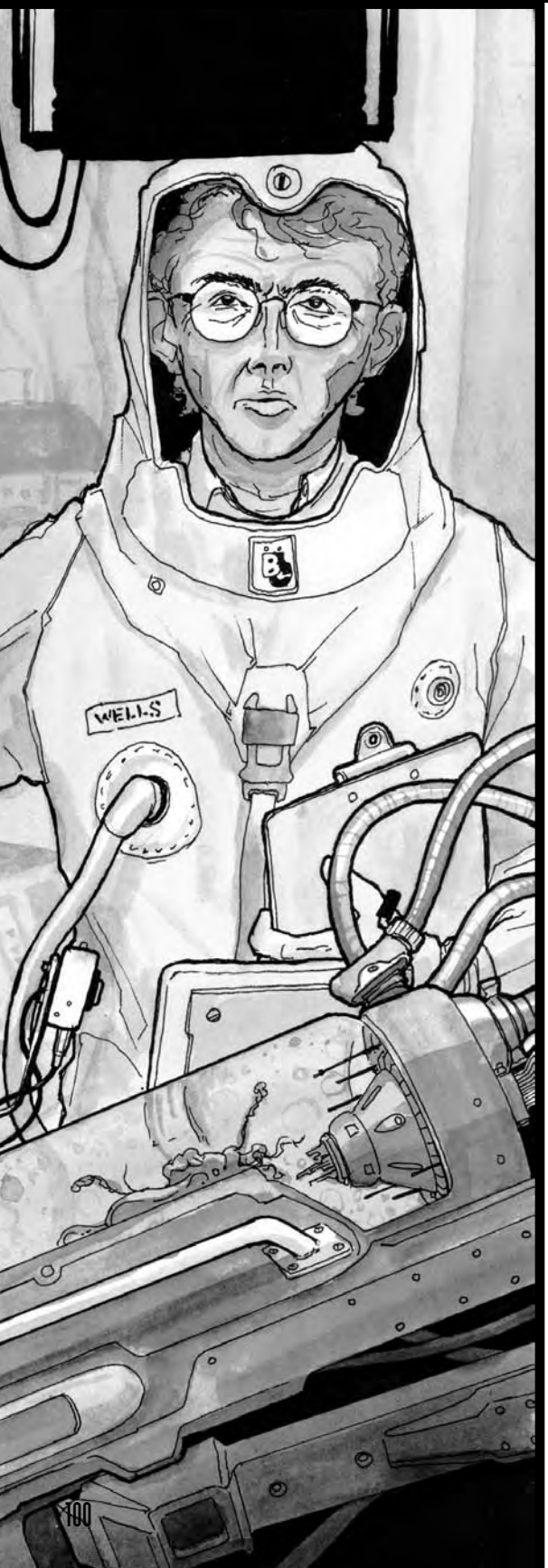
Prerequisite: Secret Service Profession

By orchestrating duty rosters and the Presidential agenda with a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, Secret Service operatives can arrange to be in the right place at the right time to send forged presidential orders and directives. Depending on the importance of the orders, they may be found to be fraudulent in a few hours or may remain undetected for days. The repercussions of the false order also vary depending on its importance. For example, a Presidential stay of execution may go unnoticed for a few days, and even after it is discovered it will quite possibly be ignored. On the other hand, a Presidential directive to prepare for war with France will probably not last through the hour, and the operative better have a really good reason for causing the resulting international crisis.

Specialized Aircraft
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: MOONDUST, Ranch, or USAF Profession

Requesting the use of a specific aircraft requires the character to have access to a long runway or a military base. Further, these aircraft are moved only at night to limit the viewing of unauthorized personnel. Aircraft are only lent for a period of one mission or testing period as outlined in the request for the vehicle. Military aircraft that are presently available include the SR71 Blackbird reconnaissance craft, the B2 Spirit stealth bomber, the F117 Nighthawk stealth fighter, and the F/A22 Raptor stealth fighter. Other aircraft may also be made available. This requires a successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Rare experimental craft such as the Aurora impose a –4 penalty, and any captured operational alien craft a –8 penalty. If the character's team does not have the necessary piloting skills, requesting a team for the craft incurs



a –2 penalty. Delivery time is dependent on how urgent the request is. In any event, the vehicle will not be available for D6 + 6(9) hours. Being flown to another country imposes an additional –2 penalty, and time is no less than two days. Damaged, destroyed, lost, or absconded craft results in a visit by hard-faced internal security agents, a loss of access to this Pulling String while the incident is investigated, and even more dire repercussions.

Species Identification
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal or Science & Research)

The Office of Energy Research's Human Genome Program (HGP) is the lead automated high-throughput DNA-sequencing program in the country. Unofficially, the program has been broadened significantly. Grey, Saurian, and a few highly guarded Atlantean DNA samples are being analyzed as well. Recently, this program was expanded to include animals and some cryptozoological creatures. With a successful Willpower and Bureaucracy Task, a character can have a DNA sample secretly analyzed. A full report on the sample (not always conclusive) is delivered in D6 x 2(6) days. Higher Success Levels halve (round up) the time of the analysis.

Stopping Investigation
1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Law Enforcement)

Many police investigations go unsolved or are dropped due to understaffing or faulty procedures. An investigation can be forcibly sidetracked for these reasons using a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. Modifiers depend upon the agent's involvement in the case or how exposed the case is to public scrutiny, at the Chronicler's discretion.

Supernatural Lore
2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal)

Certain religious cults, occultists, and warriors have been fighting the supernatural for centuries. It is no surprise that they have managed to accumulate extensive files on supernatural occurrences and locations, including information on some of the older and more prolific demons. Obtaining information about any of these subjects is dependent on what information the character is looking for. The rarer information is possessed by the most powerful occultists, and it is well guarded and not usually shared. This Pulling String is treated as a contact. The agent must bribe, smooth-talk, or convince the information holder through various meetings in order to uncover the information he needs.

SWAT

2-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement)

The character has access to SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) teams, consisting of six highly trained, fully armed and armored men who have statistics equivalent to the soldier staff member (see p. 123), equipped as the Chronicler sees fit. To call a team to an ongoing violent situation requires no roll. In a situation where there is no clear danger requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task. If the use of the SWAT team needs to be a secret, a –2 penalty is applied. There will be repercussions if the actions that the SWAT team takes are difficult to cover up, such as dozens of bodies, blown-up buildings, or other hard-to-explain events.

Translators

1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence (Paranormal or Science & Research)

Those who delve into ancient manuals usually maintain a number of specialists in a variety of living, dead, and arcane languages. These personnel may be called upon to translate any text in any language. The time required to translate depends on the Success Levels of an Intelligence and Research/Investigation Task (one level = a month, two levels = a week, three levels = three days, four levels or more = a day). Particularly long, obscure, or important texts may multiply that translation time by a factor determined by the Chronicler.

Vehicle Check

1-point Pulling String

Prerequisite: Influence: Any

Access to DMV databases can reveal vehicle and owner information, as well as outstanding warrants and traffic tickets. To have a license plate traced requires a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task – this provides the owner's name, address, Social Security number, phone numbers, and description. Getting information on outstanding warrants and traffic tickets requires two Success Levels.

SKILL LIST

The following list of skills is relatively extensive. As with all the rules in this book, however, it should always take a second seat to plain common sense. If a player is trying to twist the letter of the rules to wring some unreasonable advantage, the Chronicler should let common sense prevail. On the other hand, if a highly technical reading of a certain skill's text prohibits what seems to be an acceptable use, the Chronicler's discretion should also apply.

Acrobatics (Special)

The ability to perform tumbles, somersaults, and other complex physical maneuvers. This skill teaches balance, flexibility, and speed.

Use Acrobatics and Dexterity for most Tasks. Acrobatics can also be used instead of Dodge to avoid attacks.

Acting

The ability to play a role and successfully counterfeit behaviors, emotions, and other character traits. A talented actor can weep on demand, or convincingly display an array of emotions. This skill is useful both to legitimate artists and to criminals and con men.

Use Intelligence and Acting to give a good performance, and Perception and Acting to spot or judge someone else's act.

Beautician

This is the ability to use make-up, hair dressing, and cosmetics to enhance a person's appearance. Use Intelligence and Beautician for the Task; each Success Level adds +1 to a person's Attractiveness by hiding blemishes and enhancing a person's good points. Modifiers to these Tasks include the materials available (+2 in a fully stocked beauty salon, –2 or worse with improvised materials) and the subject's basic Attractiveness level.

Beautician skills can also be used to help change a person's appearance. A skilled character can use hair dyes, contacts, and make-up to change a person's look greatly. This skill can be used to replace the Disguise skill, or can add a +1 bonus to Disguise Tasks for each level of success in the Intelligence and Beautician Task.

Using Perception and Beautician allows the character to see how extensively a person is made up, and may be used to identify a disguise (this Task is resisted by the disguiser's own Intelligence and Beautician or Disguise Tasks).

Brawling

Brawling covers basic street fighting, karate-parlor "martial arts" training, and similar combat skills.

In hand-to-hand combat, Dexterity and Brawling are used for kicks, punches, and similar maneuvers. Strength and Brawling are used for take-downs, wrestling, and slamming people.

Bureaucracy

This skill provides familiarity with the organization of, and procedures used by, bureaucratic institutions.

Use Intelligence and Bureaucracy to devise ways to make a large group or organization more (or less) efficient; use Willpower and Bureaucracy to "cut through red tape." Bureaucracy is employed in many Pulling Strings; no master manipulator should be without it.

Cheating

The skill of breaking the rules and tricking an opponent. Mostly used in games of chance and other forms of gambling.

Use Intelligence and Cheating to perform the trick, or Perception and Cheating to spot such a trick.

Climbing

A character with the Climbing skill knows how best to use any surface to get to the top.

Climbing Tasks use Dexterity, Strength, or Constitution, depending on the type of climb attempted.

Computer Hacking

This is the skill to penetrate computer systems through a modem, overcome protection and password programs, and steal information or inflict damage on the system.

Most Tasks use Intelligence and Computer Hacking, although spotting a specific type of defense or password system may use Perception and Computer Hacking instead.

Computer Programming

The skill to write a set of commands in one of the many computer languages.

Writing a program uses Intelligence and Computer Programming; Perception and Computer Programming is used to recognize elements of another program.

Computers

This is basic skill with computers, including how to use a keyboard and mouse, basic commands, and so on. As computers become more "user-friendly," Chroniclers can assume that most Computer Tasks require no roll (or gain significant positive modifiers), except where they involve unfamiliar programs and operating systems.

Craft (Type)

Craft covers numerous types of skills, such as those employed by carpenters, seamstresses, weavers, weaponsmiths, woodworkers, etc. When the Craft skill is purchased, a particular skill Type must be specified. At the Chronicler's discretion, some Craft Types may overlap, but for the most part having one Type should not measurably help with another.

Characters may further want to specialize. For example, Gunsmith is a Specialty of the Craft (Weaponsmith) skill. Bowyer would likewise relate to bows.

Intelligence and Craft are used to conceive and plan an item. Dexterity and Craft are tested to create an item, or repair a damaged item. Perception and Craft serve to appraise an item. Fine Arts, Electronics, Engineering, Mechanic, and other skills may be used to supplement the Craft skill. Note that devising and creating a particular item may be a time-consuming and difficult task. Often, it is far easier to simply buy a mass-produced item.

Dancing (Type)

This skill is not necessary to gyrate to a catchy tune. Dancing represents training in a form of dance and includes anything from ballet to tribal rituals to high accomplishment on the disco floor. The character must indicate the specific Type of Dancing he is familiar with. Other Types have a default level equal to the Dancing –2.

Dexterity and Dancing are used to actually dance; Perception and Dancing are used to recognize a type of dance and to judge the quality of another's performance.

Demolitions

The ability to set and disarm explosives.

Use Intelligence and Demolitions to set up an explosive charge, Perception and Demolitions to understand the set-up of an unfamiliar bomb, and Intelligence and Demolitions (resisted by the bomber's own Intelligence and Demolitions) to disarm an enemy bomb. Chroniclers may restrict this skill to those with access to military or espionage training.

Disguise

The ability to change one's appearance using wigs, make-up, and clothing. A high-tech spy can also use rubber masks, implants, and other gadgets to completely alter his face and even body (such high-tech aids may give bonuses of +2 to +6, at the Chronicler's discretion).

Use Intelligence and Disguise to apply a disguise, and Perception and Disguise to spot somebody else's disguise.

Dodge

This is a basic combat skill, representing the ability to move out of the way of attacks. Dodges include sidestepping a blow, "hitting the dirt" to avoid gunfire, ducking behind cover, etc. As a skill, Dodge is learned by people with some practice in getting out of the way or in diving for cover (or someone with the Psychological Problems (Cowardly) Drawback). Dodge is used with Dexterity for most Tasks.

Driving (Type)

The skill to control any land vehicle of the specific Type. Each kind of vehicle (Car, Truck, Tracked Vehicle, Motorcycle, among others) requires a separate Driving Type. Attempting to use a similar vehicle (cars vs. trucks) may allow for a roll with a small penalty; attempting very different driving Tasks (motorcycle vs. backhoe) would not.

Most driving Tasks use Dexterity with Driving.

Electronic Surveillance

The skill to set up, use, and detect electronic "bugs" – sophisticated microphones and cameras hidden in a location to spy on or detect people.

This skill is particularly useful for eavesdropping on cell phone conversations. All that is required is a tunable radio transceiver (any of the radios in **Chapter Three: Ops Center** will do) within range of a transmitting cell phone (one that is in use), roughly two minutes, and an Intelligence and Electronic Surveillance Task.

More generally, use Intelligence and Electronic Surveillance to set up and use a bug, and Perception and Electronic Surveillance to detect one (resisted by the operator's original Intelligence and Electronic Surveillance Task result). Chroniclers may wish to restrict this skill to those with military or espionage backgrounds.

Electronics

This skill allows a character to build and repair all manner of electronic devices and tools, and grants the character knowledge about electronic systems and the like. The difficulty of repairing an electronic device depends on how intricate the device is and how damaged it is. Constructing an electronic item is also more difficult the more advanced and complex the device. Chroniclers should apply a penalty or bonus depending on these factors. Finally, an electronic tool kit must be available for all but the most rudimentary repairs. A lab or workshop may also be required. All repair or construction attempts take time, ranging from a couple of hours to days. This too should be determined by the Chronicler.

Understanding an existing electronic device calls for a Perception and Electronics Task; repairing or constructing a device requires an Intelligence and Electronics Task. It should be noted that this skill and the Mechanic skill complement one another and are often used together.

Engineer (Type)

This skill reflects the general knowledge of structural design, material strengths, and construction techniques in a variety of fields and applications. Examples of the Types of Engineering skill include Architecture, Civil, Construction, Mechanical, Electrical, and Biological. In some games, the Chronicler may just lump them all into one category, depending on how big a role such skills play in the course of a storyline. Alternatively, separation between Engineering Types (and even Specialties) may be important to the storyline. The carryover between Types may allow some rolls at a large penalty (Architecture vs. Construction), but mostly it would not (Electrical vs. Biological).

Planning or devising an object, structure, or device within the character's Engineering Type demands an Intelligence and Engineering Task.

Escape

This is the ability to escape from ropes, handcuffs, and other restraints. Most of these Tasks use Dexterity and Escape, with each attempt taking between one and five minutes, depending on the complexity of the bonds. A simple rope tie would have no modifier, but complex knots might have penalties of –1 to –5, police handcuffs involve a penalty of –4, and a straitjacket/strap/chain combo might have penalties of –5 to –8. Expert escape artists also use visualization techniques – they carefully think about their method of escape before attempting it. This is an Intelligence and Escape Task that takes two minutes; each Success Level adds a +1 to an immediately subsequent Dexterity and Escape Task.

Fine Arts

There are many Types of Fine Arts skill, such as Drawing, Painting, Computer Graphics, Sculpting, etc. In some games, the Chronicler may lump them all into one category, depending on how big a role such skills play in the course of that campaign. Alternatively, separation between Fine Arts Skill Types (and even Specialties) may be important to the storyline. In general, carryover between Types is slight, so the penalties should be large for out-of-Type skill rolls.

Rolls to conceptualize a work of art, or to produce it from memory, improvisation, or imagination require Intelligence and Fine Arts. Rendering a concept that is recorded, such as using models or plans, requires Dexterity and Fine Arts. Appreciating another's work uses Perception and Fine Arts. The Success Levels of a Fine Arts Task indicate how good the artistic expression is (see p. 159).

First Aid

This skill allows a character to treat basic injuries and to use techniques such as CPR and the Heimlich maneuver.

A successful Intelligence and First Aid Task heals some damage to an injured person (see p. 179). Typical Tasks include identifying the problem (use Perception and First Aid), performing First Aid (Intelligence and First Aid), and using CPR or applying the Heimlich maneuver (Dexterity and First Aid).

Gambling

This is the knowledge of most common games of chance, their rules and techniques, and the best strategies to win the games. A character needs both Gambling and Cheating to break the rules effectively.

Guns (Type)

This skill allows the character to use one type of firearm or weapon system. The most common Types include Handgun (pistols and revolvers), Rifle, Shotgun, Submachine Gun, and Assault Rifle. If the skill is taken for one Type, the character can use other types of guns, but at a –2 penalty to all Tasks. This skill also covers heavier weapons with types such as Missile/Rocket Launcher, Artillery, Mortar, etc. and weapons systems on vehicles (Guns (Tank), or Guns (Fighter-Bomber)), although in most of these cases computers do most of the shooting. There is little cross-over benefit between these Types of skill, or between the heavy weapon Types and the personal weapon Types.

Dexterity and Guns are most often used to fire personal weapon. Aiming rolls use Perception and Guns; each Success Level adds +1 to the Guns skill on the next shot fired at the aimed target. Heavy weapon Types often use Perception or even Intelligence and Guns.

Haggling

This skill aids the character in dealing for goods and services, or otherwise bring two or more parties to some common ground. It may be applied when buying, selling, or bartering goods or services. Often used in a Resisted Task, each level of success modifies the price of the subject by 10 percent. It may also be used for less tangible exchanges, such as political deal-making. In such circumstances, the Chronicler should adjudicate the result given the goal and the levels of success.

Haggling can also be used to determine whether the character is being misled or conned. Use Willpower and Haggling to get the best deal; use Perception and Haggling to spot a con.

Hand Weapon (Type)

Each basic type of weapon is a separate skill. Hand Weapon Skill Types include Axe, Club, Foil/Rapier, Knife, Spear, Staff, and Sword. Pre-modern missile weapons such as Bow and Crossbow are also Types. They must be learned separately. When using an unfamiliar weapon, use the most closely related Hand Weapon skill at –2 to –4 (depending on how dissimilar the weapons are).

Humanities (Type)

Each of the various humanities disciplines (archaeology, anthropology, economics, history, law, political science, sociology, theology, etc.) counts as a separate Humanities Type. In some games, the Chronicler may just lump them all into one category, depending on how big a role such skills play in the course of the campaign. Alternatively, separation between Humanities Types (and even Specialties) may be important to the storyline, and a variety of penalties may be applied when trying to use a specific Type outside its range. In any event, most Humanities Tasks use Intelligence or Perception and Humanities.

Humanities Types can include many Specialties. For example, Humanities (Law) includes a number of different subjects, any one of which may be a Specialty (i.e., corporate law, environmental law, criminal law, etc.). Other than giving a character the normal +2 Task bonus for Specialties, Chroniclers may wish to penalize Tasks attempted outside the specialization. For example, a character with Humanities (Ancient History) gains a +2 bonus for Tasks involving the Spartan wars, but may incur a –1 penalty for a question concerning the Renaissance, or a –3 penalty for a question about World War I.

Hypnosis

This skill allows the character to place a subject in a trance-like state. While in trance, the subject can recall any memory to the smallest detail, even if that memory has been consciously forgotten or even buried due to trauma or brainwashing. If the memory is particularly traumatic, however, the person may not be able to answer the questions coherently. In addition to questioning, the hypnotist may implant suggestions and commands

that the subject must obey when released from the trance. Willpower and Hypnosis are used for most Tasks, usually resisted with a Difficult Willpower Test from the subject. If uncovering memories buried by earlier hypnosis or brainwashing, the Task is resisted by the Hypnosis skill of the brainwasher, sometimes modified by the Chronicler, depending upon time and technology. Most hypnosis sessions take about ten minutes.

Instruction

Teaching is a skill and an art. The subject matter is important, but conveying that information in an interesting, stimulating, and comprehensive manner is the heart of the Instruction skill.

The first step in using the Instruction skill is to pick a subject matter to teach. This may be any skill known by the teacher, but it must be at least two levels higher than the student's level.

If the required skill level is possessed, the teacher and student must spend a certain period of time on lessons. Every week of game time that the two spend at least ten hours studying the skill, the teacher can attempt an Intelligence and Instruction Task. The Success Levels of this Task are cumulative. For example, if the teacher and student spend three weeks working on the skill, the Success Levels of all three rolls are added together. When the teacher accumulates five Success Levels in the Task, the student receives one experience point toward improving that skill.

Thom is an accomplished swordsman (level five) and a decent teacher (level three). Pete wants to learn better technique; he has Hand Weapon (Sword) 1. Thom's Hand Weapon (Sword) skill is more than two levels higher than Pete's, so he may teach him. After they spend a good deal of time working together during one week, Thom tests his Instruction skill. He rolls a six, adds three for the skill level and two for his Intelligence, for a total of 11, or two Success Levels. The next week, they study together again, and Thom rolls particularly well, gaining three Success Levels. Pete gains one experience point dedicated to the Hand Weapon (Sword) skill.

Intimidation

The skill to make people afraid, Intimidation is used by bullies or others in most confrontational situations. A good Intimidation Task result may stop a fight before it starts by convincing the opponent that he does not want to mess with the character.

Use Willpower and Intimidation for "real" intimidation attempts, or Intelligence and Intimidation to bluff.

Language [Type]

Every character is assumed to have level five in his native or primary language. Each additional language must be purchased as a separate Type. The skill level in a language determines not only basic fluency, but also the "thickness" of the character's accent. Most of the time, the character need not pass a Task to see if he communicates; as long as the character knows the language, assume that he can talk in it without needing to roll. A Task roll would be necessary in situations involving highly technical or scholarly speech (which may use a lot of words the character doesn't know) or when dealing with extreme regional accents or slang. Similarly, Tasks might be necessary depending upon the complexity of the language with regards to reading or writing.

Language Types may allow for an outside-Type roll (with small penalty) if they are in the same family (Italian, French, Spanish), but in general Types do not cross over.

Lock Picking [Type]

This skill covers all the basics in breaking and entering. There are two Types: Mechanical and Electronic. Most Tasks use Lock Picking and Dexterity, modified by the difficulty of the lock. Lock Picking (Electronic) uses Perception to spot and Intelligence to neutralize electronic locks and security systems. Non-Type rolls may not be attempted with Lock Picking.

Language Skill Level Table

Skill Level	Fluency
1	Very thick accent and frequent grammatical mistakes; the character will be immediately identified as a foreigner and may be misunderstood.
2	Thick accent but largely fluent; the character should have no problems being understood.
3	Slight accent; native speakers realize this is not the character's first language.
4	Full fluency; only a Resisted Test (listener's Simple Perception versus speaker's Simple Intelligence) spots the character's accent.
5	Complete mastery; the character can pass for a native without problems.
6+	Dialects; character can perfectly imitate regional accents and dialects in addition to the main version of the language.

Martial Arts (Special)

This is the skill of using an advanced system of hand-to-hand combat. Characters with Martial Arts can do more damage with their hands and feet. Kicks and punches performed with the Martial Arts skill have a damage bonus equal to the character's skill level. So, a character with Martial Arts 3 does an additional three points of damage with a kick or punch. This bonus is added when the rest of the damage has been calculated, after any multipliers and dice rolls. Martial Arts are covered in more detail in **Chapter Four: Tradecraft**.

Mechanic

This skill allows a character to build and repair all manner of mechanical devices and tools, and grants him knowledge about mechanical systems and the like. The difficulty of repairing a mechanism depends on how intricate the device is and how damaged it is. Chroniclers should apply a penalty or bonus depending on these factors. Constructing a mechanical item is also more difficult the more advanced and complex the device is. Again, modifiers should be imposed by the Chronicler. Finally, a mechanical tool kit must be available for all but the most rudimentary repairs. A lab or workshop may also be required. All repair or construction attempts take time, ranging from a couple of hours to days. This too should be determined by the Chronicler.

Understanding an existing mechanical device calls for a Perception and Mechanic Task; repairing or constructing a mechanism requires an Intelligence and Mechanic Task. It should be noted that this skill and the Electronics skill complement one another and often are used together to make repairs to an item or to construct an item.

Medicine (Special)

This skill covers medical knowledge, including basic surgery skills, diagnosis, and general medicine. Most doctors also specialize in one type of medicine, such as cardiovascular, surgery, or neurosurgery. These are treated as Specialty skills. Most doctors are aware of sterilization procedures to keep areas free from infection, but full Biohazard Control as used by the CDC, etc. is treated as a Specialty skill.

Diagnosis Tasks use Perception and Medicine, general treatment calls for Intelligence and Medicine, and surgery uses Dexterity and Medicine.

Myth and Legend (Type)

This is knowledge of the mythology and folklore of a specific culture or nation. This skill can be used to identify supernatural creatures, but the information gleaned from myth and legend may be completely wrong or at least very inaccurate. Each culture or nation is a separate Type. Some general patterns can be discerned from cross-societal study, but there is little in the way of carryover for non-Type rolls. The study of extraterrestrial encounters classes as Myth and Legend (UFOlogy), while the study of strange creatures such as Bigfoot is grouped into the Myth and Legend (Cryptozoology) skill.

Notice

Notice represents a person's focus and discipline in observing his environment. Used with Perception, it denotes a character's ability to see, hear, smell, or otherwise sense his surrounding area. It can also be used with Intelligence to remember something he noticed some time ago.

Notice is an active skill; it is relevant when a character specifically focuses his attention on something. Without the Notice skill, active sensing Tasks are treated as unskilled.

For passive sensing (the Chronicler determines when this is applicable, such as when resisting a Stealth Task), a Perception and Notice Task or a Simple Perception Test may be used, whichever is more beneficial to the character.

Occult Knowledge (Special)

This is the skill of true arcane knowledge. It covers most of the basic paranormal facts, including a working knowledge of Essence, Seepage, Corruption, and other specifically supernatural features.

Myth and Legend is a comparatively broader skill covering a variety of topics. Much of that information will be contradictory, false, or misinterpreted. Occult Knowledge is less inclusive (the character will not know as much), but that information, at least as relates to Seepage and mystical powers, will be essentially true. The character may also know some information about a number of cults and supernatural creatures, although some of that information may be flawed or incomplete.

Pick Pocket

This is the skill of taking another person's hard-earned money or things from his person without him noticing it. Most rolls use Dexterity and Pick Pocket, resisted by the victim's Perception and the highest of his Notice, Streetwise, or Pick Pocket skills (if any, or Perception alone – not doubled – otherwise).

Piloting (Type)

The skill to control any aircraft or water vehicle. Each type of vehicle (Propeller Plane, Jet Plane, Sailboat, Ocean Liner, Space Shuttle) requires a separate Piloting Type.

Most Tasks use Dexterity and Piloting, or Intelligence and Piloting for very large vessels. Carryover between Types is rare, if not nonexistent. Knowing how to pilot a sailboat is little use to someone behind the controls of the space shuttle.

Play Instrument (Type)

The character is able to play a musical instrument of one type, chosen when the skill is taken. The character may choose more than one instrument to play, but each instrument is counted as a separate Type. At higher levels of the skill, the character is more proficient in tonal quality, rhythm, and improvisation. In all circumstances the quality of the performance is reflected in the levels of success. No matter what the ultimate roll, no musician may enjoy more Success Levels than he has skill levels. Similar instrument Types (stringed or wind) should allow a non-Type roll without prohibitive penalties, but the more dissimilar they are, the less the carryover.

To play for pleasure, the character would use Dexterity and Play Instrument. If performing a complex piece of music, the attempt would use Intelligence and Play Instrument. If the character is performing a long piece of music, use Constitution and Play Instrument.

Questioning

This is the ability to interrogate, spot lies, and otherwise extract the truth from people. This skill is soon learned by police officers, private investigators, and investigative reporters. Most interrogations should be roleplayed. If a Task or Test is needed, how well the player roleplayed the interview should give him bonuses or penalties of +5 to –5, at the Chronicler's discretion. Tricking somebody into revealing something uses the questioner's Intelligence and Questioning, resisted by a Simple Intelligence Test. Spotting a lie uses Perception and Questioning, also resisted by a Simple Intelligence Test. Breaking a victim's will to resist uses Willpower and Questioning, resisted by a Simple Willpower Test. The use of torture and drugs may give bonuses of +1 to +6 to the questioner's Task.

Research/Investigation

This skill allows a character to seek out information or follow a series of clues and leads to a reasonable conclusion through deduction, source checking, going to libraries, searching on the Internet, and the like. Alternatively, this skill can be used by the character to do legwork – running down leads on a story, questioning contacts and sources of information (the latter would incur some penalties; this aspect would best be left to the Questioning skill).

In all cases, the use of this skill takes time. The amount of time is determined by the Chronicler, based on the nature of the search being undertaken by the character. Most uses of this skill involve Intelligence and Research Tasks. In other cases, it is possible that Constitution and Research (in the case of searching through dusty old tomes for long periods or walking the length and breadth of a library for the better part of a day), or Perception and Research (in the case of researching obscure facts in voluminous materials, such as finding a certain name in a room full of documents) can be used.

Riding (Type)

The skill to ride horses, carts, chariots, and other animals or animal-driven vehicles. Each type of animal or vehicle requires a separate Riding Type. Depending on the difference in con-

veyance, the Chronicler may allow some carryover between Types. Riding a burro is not hugely different from riding a horse; driving a cart bears no relationship to steering an elephant.

Rituals (Type)

The skill to perform rituals and ceremonies of a particular culture, religion, or mystical group (each counts as a separate Type). Rituals that require dancing or other complex physical activity use Dexterity and Rituals; most others use Intelligence and Rituals to remember all the appropriate steps or activities involved. There is no carryover between Rituals Types.

For the properly trained, rituals can be a path to supernatural power (see p. 198), and with concentration a trained ritualist can sense the flow of Seepage in the area.

Running (Type)

There are two Types of Running, with no carryover between them. The first one is Running (Marathon). This skill covers running for endurance and distance. A good marathoner can cover ten or more miles without stopping. The best runners can cover that distance in about two hours. A character with Running (Marathon) can use this skill and his Constitution Attribute to resist the effects of fatigue after a long period of extensive physical activity. Also, add one Endurance Point to the character's pool for every level in Running (Marathon).

Running (Dash) trains the character to increase speed for short distances. On a dead run, use Constitution and Running (Dash) to increase maximum running speed. Each Success Level acquired adds +1 to the character's Speed Attribute.

Sciences (Type)

Each science (Botany, Cryptography, Chemistry, Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics, etc.) counts as a separate Science Type. In some games, the Chronicler may just lump them all into one category, depending on how big a role such skills would play in the course of a campaign. Alternatively, separation between Science Types (and even Specialties) may be important to the storyline, and a variety of penalties may be applied when trying to use a specific Type outside its range. See the description of the Humanities skill for more information (p. 105).

Most Sciences Tasks use Intelligence or Perception.

Science (Cryptography) is of particular use in a conspiracy game. Deciphering electronically scrambled transmissions requires about 15 minutes of intercepted communications, a computer with cryptography software, and an Intelligence and Science (Cryptography) Task. This Task may be resisted by a similar Task by the person sending the transmissions.

Seduction

This is the ability to make oneself sexually attractive to other people by saying the right things and putting on the right act.

Intelligence is used, modified by any Charisma or Attractiveness bonuses or penalties the character might have. Other skills may give bonuses to Seduction attempts. For example, previous Tasks using Beautician and Smooth Talking add their Success Levels to the Seduction attempt.

Singing

While everybody can try to sing, this skill is necessary to do it right. This skill reflects the training of the character's voice.

Use Constitution and Singing for the quality of the song, Intelligence and Singing to remember every verse of a long or complex song, and Perception and Singing to recognize and measure the quality of someone else's singing.

Sleight of Hand

This is the ability to perform sleight of hand and legerdemain, and is known mainly by stage magicians. With this skill, a character can fool the audience into looking at one thing while he does something else.

Most Sleight of Hand Tasks use Dexterity, and are resisted by a Perception Test (Simple or Difficult depending on the circumstances) or a Perception and Notice Task. To plan a complex magical trick (*e.g.*, sawing a woman in half, diverse death traps) requires an Intelligence and Sleight of Hand Task, often supplemented by assorted Craft skills to actually build the contraptions or gadgets needed.

Smooth Talking

This skill allows the character to lie convincingly or to confuse and deceive others. This skill is commonly known by con men, salesmen, and politicians. Use Intelligence and Smooth Talking for most Tasks.

Sport (Type)

This skill covers all types of competitive sports, from football to ping pong. Each Sport must be learned as a separate Type. The carryover is usually good, and where allowed, penalties between Types should be relatively minor (–2 to –4).

Depending on the Task, use Strength or Dexterity and Sport. For example, a football pass would use Dexterity and Sport (Football); a tackle would use Strength and Sport (Football). To come up with a good strategy or game plan, use Intelligence and Sport; to spot a rules violation, use Perception and Sport.

Some agents find that the more extreme sports are useful in the field. The Sport skill covers SCUBA diving, skiing, snowboarding, and parachuting.

Stealth

This is the ability to move quietly and to take advantage of cover and concealment.

Most Task rolls use Dexterity and Stealth; Perception is used to find good hiding places.

Storytelling

This skill allows a character to sway or influence an audience, be it one individual or a group of people, from one emotion to the next by means of a tale. It can be used for the purpose of educating an individual or a group of people, as well as merely for entertainment. In some cultures, storytelling is the means by which knowledge and lore are passed down, so the skill has uses for some primitive societies, but it is also quite useful under certain circumstances when dealing with Myth and Legend, Occult Knowledge, and the like. The character may tell a tale that is true or fictional, although the audience will generally not know the difference. The character must constantly be aware of how the listeners are reacting to the tale and thus may alter his pacing and volume, or even change the course of the story to elicit a better or greater response.

Storytellers use Willpower and Storytelling Tasks. The Success Levels dictate the effectiveness or entertainment value of the story. If the people listening to the story are familiar with the tale, they may resist the attempt of the storyteller character to influence them with a Difficult Willpower Test.

Streetwise

General knowledge of the lore and rules of the streets. A character with this skill knows how to behave in a given situation, knows the names and most of the faces of the more notorious local members of the underworld, and can identify most illegal transactions and operations.

Use Intelligence and Streetwise to recognize a local street name, gang color, or criminal, and Perception and Streetwise to spot trouble or detect criminal activities nearby.

Surveillance

This is the ability to follow and keep people under observation. A character with Surveillance can attempt to keep sight of a target while following him through a crowded street, and remaining unobserved. By the same token, this skill allows a person to know if he is being followed or observed. Use Perception and Surveillance for either activity.

Survival [Type]

This is the skill of living off the land. Each kind of terrain requires a separate Type. Attempts to use a Survival skill in the wrong place or type of terrain are at a –3 penalty. Common Types include Forest, Mountain, Jungle, Desert, and Arctic.

In general, Willpower and Survival Tasks are required, but Intelligence or Perception may be used on occasion. Those attempting Survival Tasks without a survival kit or the proper gear suffer –3 to –10 penalties.

The repercussions of failed Survival Tests are detailed on the Temperature Effects Chart.

Temperature Effects Chart

General categories for environmental conditions are given. Chroniclers should decide which apply. Damage is taken in Endurance Points until those are exhausted, then in Life Points.

Extremely Cold: Strength –3, Dexterity –3, Constitution –3, Willpower –2; D8(4) points of damage per Turn; frostbite occurs within minutes of exposure.

Very Cold: Strength –1, Dexterity –1, Constitution –1, Willpower –1; 1 point of damage per Turn; frostbite may occur after 30 minutes of exposure.

Cold: Dexterity –1; 1 point of damage every 30 minutes; frostbite might occur after a few hours of exposure.

Hot: 1 point of damage every 30 minutes.

Very Hot: Strength –1, Dexterity –1, Constitution –2, Willpower –2; 1 point of damage per minute; may suffer heat exhaustion.

Extremely Hot: Strength –3, Dexterity –3, Constitution –3, Willpower –2; D4(2) point of damage per 30 seconds; will suffer heat exhaustion with any strenuous activity.

Swimming

Swimming allows a character to stay afloat and to move in the water without drowning. Floating is a Constitution and Swimming Task with a +1 or +2 bonus when fully clothed, +5 or more with little or no clothing. Each two EV (see p. 115) of equipment or weight effectively reduces a character's Swimming skill level by one.

If the Task is failed, the character sinks and drowns in a number of Turns equal to his Constitution. Shedding clothing or equipment (which requires one Turn) allows a character to attempt the Task anew.

If the character succeeds, he stays afloat and may swim at a speed equal to his Swimming skill in yards per Turn. Swimming is an exhausting activity. Floating with little clothing uses one Endurance Point per ten minutes. Floating while fully clothed uses one Endurance Point per minute. Swimming unclothed takes one Endurance Point per minute at half-speed and five Endurance Points per minute at full speed. Those who swim clothed, or who carry equipment when they swim, use double the Endurance cost and move at half-speed (round down).

Towing another person while Swimming imposes a –1 modifier, doubles the Endurance cost, and halves the swimmer's speed (round down).

Systems Operations [Type]

This is the skill of operating and understanding complex devices – radar sets, advanced communication systems, sonar devices, etc. Each Type must be learned separately: Communications, Electronic Warfare, Encryption, Radar, Sonar.

Systems Operation Tasks use Intelligence and the Systems Operations skill. Systems that require a fine ear or eye (sonar, for example) use Perception and Systems Operations instead. Using an unfamiliar system (anything the character has not trained with) incurs penalties of –1 to –4, depending upon the difference between the systems.

Radar operation uses Perception and Systems Operation, but only objects with cover (nothing high in the air) or stealth, or small objects require a Task. Locking on with a missile uses Intelligence (or the vehicle's Accuracy) and Systems Operations.

Throwing [Type]

This skill has five basic Types, but others may be added as desired. Throwing (Knife) includes all small, edged weapons. Throwing (Axe) covers any top-heavy object with a longish handle. Throwing (Spear) is used for long, pointed objects. Throwing (Net) is for large, entangling objects. Throwing (Sphere) provides expertise in targeting rocks, grenades, or any such hand-sized object. The latter also defaults directly to Sport (Baseball), if that skill is possessed. No benefit carry over to Tasks outside of the particular Type.

All Tasks use Strength and Throwing.

Tracking

This is the skill used to follow the trail of an animal or person, usually in wilderness terrain, but also in an urban setting if snow or dust is present in enough quantity to leave a trail.

Most Tracking Tasks use Perception and Tracking; attempts to hide one's tracks use Intelligence and Tracking.

Trance [Special]

Trance enables the character to enter a meditative state that transcends physical limitations. Among other things, someone in a trance can withstand pain, hunger, and thirst better than the average human being. A trance is also helpful when sensing the influence of the supernatural.

To enter a trance, use Willpower and Trance. If successful, the character becomes extremely focused on the matter at hand, which gives him a –2 penalty on all unrelated Perception Tests. On the other hand, the character is not affected by pain and shock penalties, and he gains a +2 bonus on all Tasks and Tests he is concentrating on. A character in Trance also regains Essence at double the normal amount per hour of meditation.

Traps

This is the knowledge to detect, disarm, and set traps, snares, and the like. It is commonly known by Special Forces soldiers, guerrillas, hunters, trappers, and others. Use Traps and Intelligence to devise a trap, Traps and Perception to detect a trap, and Traps and Dexterity to disarm a trap.

Unconventional Medicine [Type]

This skill covers all methods of healing not widely accepted by Western science, including herbal medicine, acupuncture, etc., each of which is considered a different Type. The effectiveness of each type of unconventional medicine is determined by the Chronicler. If the skill is effective in treating disease and injury, use the same skills and effects as the conventional Medicine skill.

Veterinary Medicine

As the Medicine skill, but applied to animals. A veterinarian can treat humans but is at a –3 penalty to all Task rolls and can never gain more than two Success Levels.

Weight Lifting

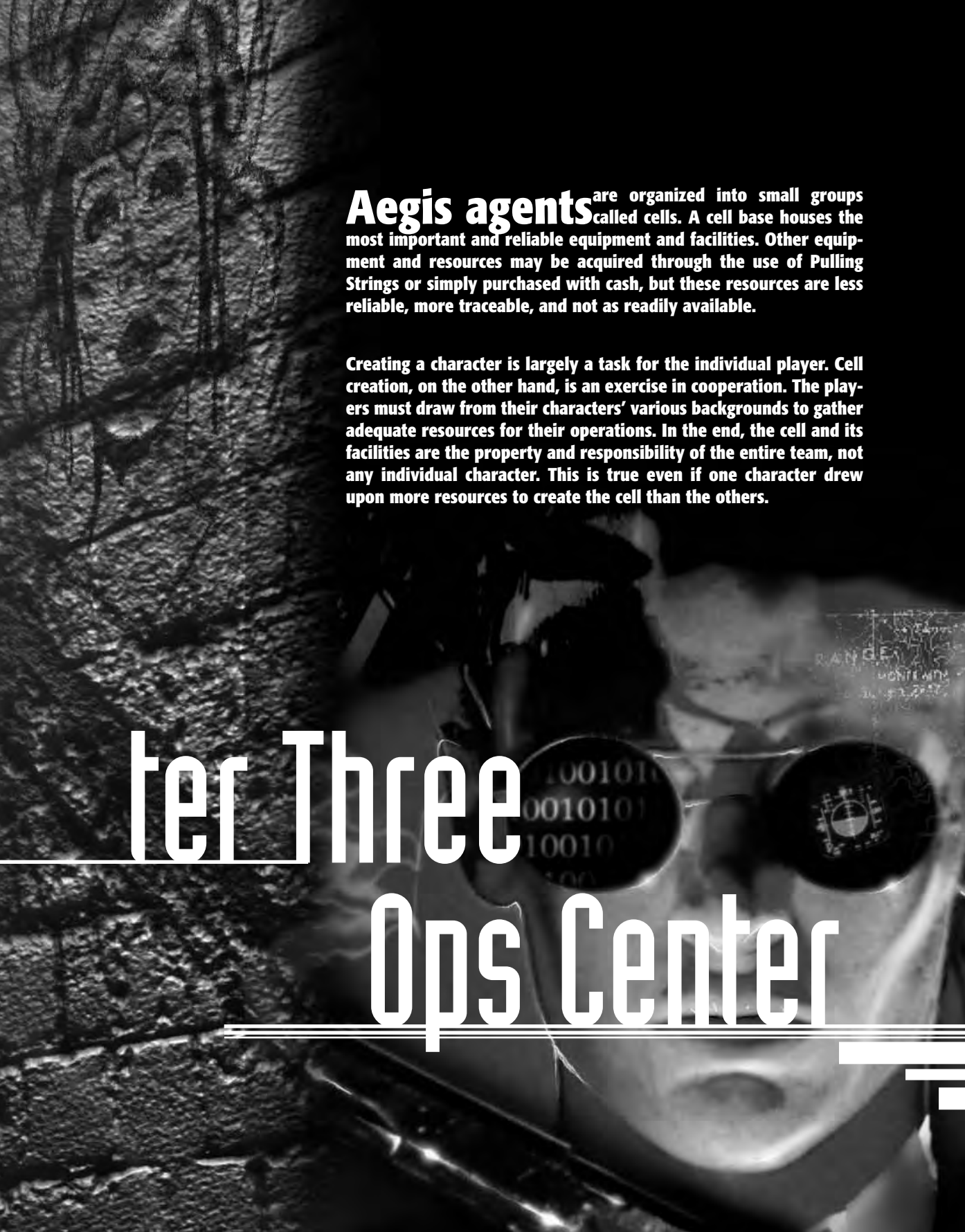
When trying to exceed Strength limits (see p. 34-35), Weight Lifting is very helpful. Use Strength and Weight Lifting instead of a Simply Strength Test, or, if the Strength Attribute is higher than the Weight Lifting skill, add one third of the Weight Lifting skill level (rounded up) to the base number.

Writing [Type]

This skill allows the character to construct and write entertaining and/or meaningful accounts and narratives. The character is able to write text in a convincing manner to suit whatever goal or presentation is required. Types of skills can include Academic (learned expositions of the arts, humanities, or sciences), Advocacy (legal arguments, ad copy, or promotional materials), Creative (such as novels, poems, and plays), Journalistic (informative discussions of newsworthy topics), and Technical (precise descriptions using nomenclature specific to a certain technology). Some carryover exists between Types, and cross-Type penalties should be in the –3 to –5 area (as long as the proper lexicon can be found – a creative writer working up a legal document is lost if he does not know the proper terms).

Using an Intelligence and Writing Task, the character is able to write documents, items, notes, or whatever the type of specialization implies. The quality of the writing depends on the Success Levels obtained. The Success Level of such a work cannot exceed the writer's skill, however. Using a Perception and Writing Task, the character can critique writing of the style with which he is familiar.

Chap



Aegis agents are organized into small groups called cells. A cell base houses the most important and reliable equipment and facilities. Other equipment and resources may be acquired through the use of Pulling Strings or simply purchased with cash, but these resources are less reliable, more traceable, and not as readily available.

Creating a character is largely a task for the individual player. Cell creation, on the other hand, is an exercise in cooperation. The players must draw from their characters' various backgrounds to gather adequate resources for their operations. In the end, the cell and its facilities are the property and responsibility of the entire team, not any individual character. This is true even if one character drew upon more resources to create the cell than the others.

ter Three

Ops Center

FORMING THE CELL

CELL RESOURCES

Five properties of the cell base must be addressed: location, facilities, staff, equipment (weapons, espionage, electronics, science, gear, and vehicles), and restricted resources. Each asset requires a certain Type of Influence Quality and a number of Resource Points to acquire it for the cell.

RESOURCE POINTS (RP)

The amount of pull necessary to acquire a particular property for a cell is rated by the number of Resource Points (RP). Money alone cannot secure most of the items the cell would desire. Many such items are regulated and monitored. The Resource Point cost of an asset represents its value, the manipulation of people and organizations needed to secure it, and the time and effort required to bury any paper trail revealing where the asset was finally delivered.

Players spend these points to obtain property during the formation of the cell. Characters with access to the same type of Influence Quality may pool points together to appropriate a property they would not normally be able to afford. Characters may contribute points toward the acquisition of restricted resources (see p. 150) only if they are part of certain organizations.

During cell creation, each member may spend five RP per level of Influence Quality she possesses. Resource Points that are not spent are lost once cell creation is completed.

After character creation, agents can secure certain assets by purchasing them with cash. Often this leaves a paper trail or other evidence the agent probably does not want around if things go wrong. To secure untraceable assets, the cell should restock or acquire new assets using RP gained through Downtime (see p. 184)

REQUIREMENTS

Each asset contains a description, a cost, and prerequisites. Nearly all require one or more Types of Influence Quality. Descriptions provide all of the necessary game information to use these items during the course of a campaign.

SPACES

Location resources have a certain volume of space in which to put facilities. Following the name of the location is how many available spaces of volume it has. Facility resources may be assigned to a location until it is full. Any facilities that are included in the location description need not be counted against the available spaces.

Facilities have a certain space they consume. Following the name of the facility is the number of "spaces" it uses within a location.

UNDERSTANDING EQUIPMENT

Most items include a description, game stats, an Encumbrance Value (EV), and cost (where applicable). Weapons and armor present additional features, such as damage imposed or Armor Value. Weapons stats are presented here, but details of how weapons are actually used are covered in **Chapter Four: Tradecraft**.

Range: These numbers are expressed in yards and reflect point-blank, short, medium, long, and extreme range (separated by slashes). The ranges listed are the limits: anything below the limit is considered to be in that range, anything beyond it goes to the next range level. Note that projectiles may continue to travel some distance after going past extreme range and may still be lethal, but the chance of hitting the designated target is nil.

Damage: The damage range normally imposed by the weapon is given.

Cap: The magazine capacity indicates how many bullets are typically contained in a fully loaded gun. This can vary widely, however.

Encumbrance Value (EV): This measures an item's weight, plus an additional factor to represent bulk. Both interfere with movement and cost Endurance. A character may carry up to half her maximum weight allowance (see Strength Table, p. 35) without penalty. Above that point, to 125% of carrying capacity, the character is lightly encumbered and suffers a –1 penalty to Speed and to all Tests or Tasks that involve movement (such as Stealth and initiative rolls). Furthermore, at that weight level, D4(2) Endurance Points are lost per ten minutes. Moderate encumbrance runs between 126% and 150% of maximum weight allowance, imposes a –2 penalty to movement, and costs D4(2) Endurance Points per five minutes. Heavy encumbrance arises between 151% and 175%, imposes a –3 penalty to movement, and costs D4(2) Endurance Points per two minutes. Extra heavy encumbrance arises at more than 175% maximum weight allowance, imposes a –5 penalty to movement, and costs D4(2) Endurance Points per minute.

Cost: This is expressed in dollars. This is provided in case the character wishes to purchase the item without using RPs.

CREATING PROPERTIES

The list in this chapter is far from exhaustive. Anything a cell could desire may be incorporated into the *Conspiracy X* HQ creation system. Initially, the players and Chronicler should carefully describe the property, considering what features are "built in." As a rough guide, each "space" the property holds or consumes is equal to 10-50 square yards. Note that this applies only to the spaces controlled by the cell. Some locations are actually five to 15 times the size of the cell base, but the cell occupies only a small, secure portion of the location. This allows the majority of the location to operate in a normal, "public" manner to enhance security. For instance, the industrial park might really be 12,000 square yards, but only 800 square yards of that is the cell base, hidden in an inconspicuous building on the edge of the park. The rest is a real industrial park with real businesses carrying on real commerce, unaware of the cell base's presence.

The RP cost should be determined by reviewing properties similar to those given in this chapter, and any special "built in" additions. Chroniclers should also consider any economic and political difficulties faced by the cell in securing the property. These add one to four RP to the cost.

Certain locations and facilities have no space number. These properties take their space statistic from whatever else they modify, as in the case of armored facilities or a biohazard suite. Where a property has no set space volume, the designation "(varies)" follows the name.

Some locations restrict the number of large (four-space) facilities, or other properties, such as airstrips. This represents the limits of space and concealment in certain areas. A cell may wish to place a prohibited facility next to a location, however. For example, an airstrip might be located next to an estate, or a bomb shelter might be placed under a hospital. In this case, the "free-floating" facility incurs a +1 RP cost (local zoning laws may need to be changed, or bypassed, or some other influence-peddling done). Also, the Chronicler must judge whether such a combination of facilities and locations is viable, or if particular features of the area serve to increase the RP cost further. For example, certain high-density residential locations on the East Coast could easily contain an estate, but the economic and political ramifications of an adjacent airstrip would be significant. A Chronicler would be justified in charging an extra two to four RP, or simply prohibiting the airstrip.

LOCATIONS

Locations are structures that house the cell's personnel, equipment, and operations. Cells may, and probably should, have more than one location. The cell base is considered extremely secure, as are all of its facilities and attendant personnel, so keeping investigations on base is always preferred. In addition to the facilities listed in each entry below, cell locations automatically include such security measures as are necessary to comply with Aegis security standards (locks and HERMES-link monitored alarm signals), as well as any mundane facilities such as kitchens, dining space, and restrooms.

Each location entry describes the general features of the location and any restrictions on its use or availability.

Abandoned Building
5 RP; Space 14

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Whether it is an old school, business, apartment building, or even a church, these locations are large enough to function as the center of an Aegis cell's operations. The only difficulty is in ensuring that no prying eyes are turned to the building; more than one homeless person has stumbled into areas not meant to be seen. This can be messy and unfortunate.

Restrictions: The abandoned building may not have an airstrip. It may only contain two four-space facilities, and no facility may be obvious from the outside (outdoor gunnery range, overt helipad, and the like).

Armored Location
+5 RP; Space Varies

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Law Enforcement, or Military)

The specified location is armored to withstand outside assault for the additional cost listed. The base cost supplies AV 25, DC 75, BV 60. Subsequent expenditure (+5 RP each) modifies the values by AV +5, DC +25, BV +10 each time.

Bomb Shelter
2 RP; Space 5

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

A legacy of decades of Cold War paranoia, bomb shelters exist in every town and city across the nation. Their disuse, seclusion, and security make them ideal bases for smaller cells with few resources, and excellent bolt-holes for equipment and weapon stashes for larger cells. Wise placement of bomb shelter caches ensures that a cell is never too far from supplies.

Restrictions: The major drawback to a bomb shelter is lack of space. A bomb shelter may have no four-space facilities, no airstrip, and no helipad, and the total combined maximum staff may not exceed five.

Estate
5 RP; Space 20

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Paranormal)

Independently wealthy individuals have an option for the placement of the cell that is not available to other characters. A private estate provides excellent security and seclusion as well as an established suite of facilities and room to build more. The estate provides the cell with a pool, gym, four-car garage, and six bedrooms (dormitories) at no extra RP cost.

Restrictions: No more than one four-space facility (other than the pool listed above) may be incorporated into the estate, and no airstrip.

Industrial Park
10 RP; Space 16

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Providing the cell with high security, modern utilities, ample room for four-space facilities, and considerable freedom from surveillance, access to or exclusive use of a portion of an industrial park makes an ideal cell location. Indeed, if the park is small enough, the cell may occupy the whole area. Such installations are often disguised by legitimate "front" operations to avoid suspicion. This location comes with a mainframe computer facility at no extra RP cost.

Restrictions: It is prohibitively expensive to incorporate more than two four-space facilities into an industrial park.

Marine Research Vessel
10 RP; Space 8

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

The marine research vessel is a massive ocean-going ship designed for extensive research projects at sea. The ship contains living quarters and supplies for several months or more. The ship's command center is equipped with a radar array, GPS terminal, and base radio. The deck includes a helipad and room to accommodate up to two additional watercraft, such as minisubs or speedboats (must be purchased separately).

Restrictions: Only one four-space facility may be built into the boat (and no airstrip).

Military Base
15 RP; Space 20

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

One of the most desirable locations for a cell, a military base allows the members of the cell to operate with a freedom that is seldom possible with other sites. The Base Commander may be a member of the cell itself. If so, and if the base is small, the Aegis operatives may be the only personnel on base. Other cells may be hidden among numerous facilities and projects on a larger base. Security and work space are seldom problems for cells located on military bases. On the other hand, operatives must be aware that security breaches from other military personnel who are not Aegis operatives is still an issue. A surprise spot check from a curious Brigadier General can mean disaster for an unprepared cell. Military bases include barracks and a brig at no additional RP cost.

Restrictions: Only agents with the Influence (Military) Quality as part of their Profession may purchase a military base location.

Office Building
5 RP; Space 8

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Paranormal, or Science & Research)

Modern facilities, decent security, and excellent opportunities for "front" organizations make a portion of an office building a good choice for a cell that does not mind neighbors. If the space is small enough, the cell may occupy the whole building. Office suites/buildings provide, free of charge, several modern business necessities: broadband communications wiring, a computer workstation, fax machine, copier, and, most importantly, a paper shredder. Many cells contain high-ranking agents from organizations such as the CDC, FBI, or CIA. This allows the office to pose as the local branch office of that agency. A small staff from the "front" agency handles daily business and routine operations unaware of the true nature of the facility.

Restrictions: Office buildings suffer from space restrictions. Also, due to zoning ordinances, living quarters and similar facilities must be carefully camouflaged. An office building cell may not have an airstrip and can have no four-space facilities.

Offshore Oilrig
15 RP; Space 10

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal and Science & Research)

Very difficult to secure, because of the shortage of sites available, the offshore rig is popular with coastal cells. It offers both space and security, and operations out of the rig are easy to conceal. Of course, it is susceptible to hurricanes and bad storms. It comes equipped with radar array and helipad.

Restrictions: The oilrig may hold only two four-space facilities and may not have an airstrip. "Garages" are possible, but only for seagoing vessels, and must include a vehicle elevator (actually an automatic winch).

Private Residence
3 RP; Space 10

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Even though it is discouraged by official Aegis policy, some cells still choose to center operations in suburban homes or private residences. The only real advantage to this is the reluctance of most illegal groups to operate freely inside soccer-mom territory. The home includes three dormitory-style rooms and a two-car garage at no extra cost.

Restrictions: The private residence may have only one four-space facility and may not be equipped with an airstrip or helipad, nor any other item that may be seen from the outside of the home.

Storefront
1 RP; Space 4

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Common in the early days of Aegis, these sites are poor locations for a cell's main operations, but can be adequate for temporary ops or as safe houses. The site is a single small store, perhaps with attached garage. The cost of the site includes the essential modifications for Aegis use, such as window shutters or tinting, and a good security system. The storefront lowers the cost of any underground site by 1 RP.

Restrictions: A major lack of space prevents the storefront from having any four-space facilities, airstrips, or helipads. A single set of living quarters may be located upstairs, and only one garage and one other facility may be attached.

Underground
15 RP; Space 16

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

A covertly constructed, underground base is without exception the best possible location for a cell. Security is unparalleled. Underground bases vary greatly, depending on the specific needs of the cells that create them. They range from cavernous aircraft hangars and research facilities built under mountains to secret subbasements beneath downtown skyscrapers.

Restrictions: Facilities for aircraft are understandably more difficult to build underground. Entrances for vehicles also require special consideration. Underground hangars and garages require vehicle elevators. Airstrips must be above ground and visible; to build on underground costs +5 RPs.

Underwater
15 RP; Space 16

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Similar to its distant cousin the underground base, this is a secret facility built entirely underwater. It is excellent for concealment purposes but does have the problem of being in a hostile environment. The base could be built into a privately owned island or reef, or located below twenty fathoms of water off the continental shelf, away from popular diving sites. The site includes the life-support facility and 10 RP of armoring for no extra cost.

Restrictions: No facilities for vehicles incapable of submerging. Entry and egress are potentially difficult. The cell will probably need a second, inland site for ease of operations.

Warehouse
5 RP; Space 8

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Generally, the only way to locate four-space facilities within city limits is to base the cell in a warehouse in an industrial district. The cell's activities are also less likely to draw unwanted attention in a city's relatively unpopulated industrial zone. At night, the area is often nearly deserted, allowing the cell to operate under cover of darkness. The primary disadvantages of a warehouse cell are the lack of amenities and added difficulty in providing adequate security.

Restrictions: Though spacious, warehouses are difficult to modify to accommodate more than a single four-space facility. Further, no airstrip is possible.

FACILITIES

Facilities are relatively large features of a location. They range from helipads to garages to labs to pools. Following the name of the facility is how many spaces of volume it takes up. There is a limit to the number of four-space facilities that may be found in certain locations.

All facility RP costs include the legal and governmental manipulations necessary to secure all official permits allowing unimpeded operations.

Airstrip
8 RP; Space 4

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

An airstrip can be anything from a long stretch of hard-packed gravel to a mile-long paved runway for cargo planes, the major trade-off being between utility and conspicuousness. Fighter jets generally require short strips; even shorter ones can be used if a carrier-like catapult is installed. The space shuttle needs a strip approximately four miles long. The airstrip includes appropriate control tower facilities, as well as a base radio and radar array.

Armored Facilities
+1 RP; Space Varies

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Any facility may be armored to withstand outside assault for the additional cost listed. The base cost supplies AV 25, DC 75, BV 60. Each subsequent expenditure modifies the values by AV +5, DC +25, BV +10. This is the same as Armored Location, but cheaper as the armoring applies only to a particular facility within the location; for example, only the Computer Facilities are armored to protect any collected data.

Auditorium/Briefing Room
1 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This is an office-style meeting room with an audiovisual array. Ideal for running briefings of cell personnel or for meeting with outside personnel (the entrance can be assumed to be from the outside of the site in the latter case). For an additional one RP, this room can be made soundproof, bugproof, and TEMPEST-resistant.

Barracks
2 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement or Military)

Minimal on-site quarters for up to 10 people. Includes five double bunks, lockers, showers, and lavatories. Two barracks constitute one four-space facility.

Biohazard Suite
5 RP; Space Varies

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

The biohazard suite is not so much a separate facility, but rather an addition or modification to a laboratory facility. Converting a lab to a biohazard suite involves making it airtight and adding an airlock and decontamination area (called the Gray Zone), an air filtration system, biohazard spacesuits, and a biochemical laboratory. These modifications make the lab a Biohazard Level 4 secure area, fully equipped for work with lethal viruses, chemical and biological agents, and extraterrestrial biological samples and life forms.

When working in a biohazard suite, researchers first enter a preparation room where they don biohazard spacesuits. They then enter the Gray Zone airlock, where they are showered with UV radiation and antiseptic chemicals. Finally, the scientists enter the suite and connect their suits to external filtered air sup-

plies. When finished, personnel pass once again through the Gray Zone to be decontaminated before entering the real world.

Biohazard suites cost a base number of RP, plus an additional amount depending on the maximum staffing level of the suite (see Workspace Addition, p. 123).

Brig
2 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

A secure holding area for up to four prisoners, complete with meal slot and dual-function toilet/sink. Two brigs constitute a four-space facility.

Communications Links
2 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Any major use of telecommunications lines or resources falls under this category. This includes high-speed cable or fiber optic lines suitable for data, voice, or fax transmission (including Internet) and a satellite uplink.

Darkroom
3 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Used to develop ordinary photographs, a normal darkroom is readily available to the general population. Many Aegis cells install more sophisticated darkrooms that can process not only ordinary film, but also professional quality, high-speed, infrared, military, and other exotic types of film including foreign military satellite cartridges. If the processing method for the film is known or can be found out, then the film can be developed. Otherwise, correctly determining the proper procedure is a Surveillance Task. A darkroom comes equipped with a revolving windowless door.

Dive Bay
1 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Used to access the sea from a submerged site, this facility provides room for up to four divers at a time. It also has the capacity to store and refill tanks for divers, and to store the other miscellaneous gear which divers require.

Dormitory
1 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This is a one- or two-person room with minimal accommodations, similar to a cheap hotel room.

Environment Chamber
5 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

These chambers are designed to allow total control over a small environment. They may take a variety of forms, from large cylindrical metallic chambers to small rooms. The operator can make the atmosphere within the chamber vary in composition and pressure, from near-vacuum to 30 atmospheres of pure hydrogen. The atmosphere of the chamber can be completely recycled to ensure that less than one part in a billion of the original contents remains. Temperature and humidity are controlled through the gases injected, and sprayers throughout the chamber can flood it with any chemical that will not destroy it. Designed specifically for handling people and objects exposed to extraterrestrial environments such as the moon surface and near orbits, it is also effective for more mundane uses, for example, as a decompression chamber.

Field Hospital
3 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

This rudimentary unit includes five beds and supplies equivalent to those found in a medic's kit. It provides a +1 bonus to Medicine and First Aid Tasks (performed by the caregiver). Two field hospitals constitute a four-space facility.

Firing Range
2 RP; Space 4

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

This area allows training or practice in Guns and other ranged weapon skills.

Garage
1 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

More than simply a storage area for cars, this two-vehicle garage is also equipped for standard vehicle maintenance and simple repairs. Remove any penalties to Mechanic Tasks that may have been imposed due to lack of equipment. Major repairs or alterations require a mechanical workspace. An eight-car-sized space constitutes a four-space facility.

Gym
2 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

This facility allows characters to keep physically fit and to train or practice in a number of combat/weapon skills, including Acrobatics, Brawling, Climbing, Hand Weapon, Martial Arts, Running, and Sport.

Hangar
1 RP; Space 4

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

The hanger contains facilities for maintaining any aircraft the cell controls, including refueling, ordinance changes, and minor repairs. Minor repairs are at no penalty to Mechanic Tasks, but major repairs and modifications suffer a –2. An aerospace workspace is required to effect major repairs or actual modifications to craft. Hangers that house a small prop airplane cost 1 RP. Larger spaces multiply that cost accordingly.

Helipad
5 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

A helipad allows helicopters and VTOL aircraft to take off and land. As with an airstrip, the helipad includes a base radio and a radar array. Unlike airstrips, helipads can be located in urban areas.

Hospital
8 RP; Space 4

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

This facility supports 20 patients. It provides a +3 bonus to Medicine and First Aid Tasks (performed by the caregiver) and is equipped for full surgery.

Intensive Care Unit
10 RP; Space 2

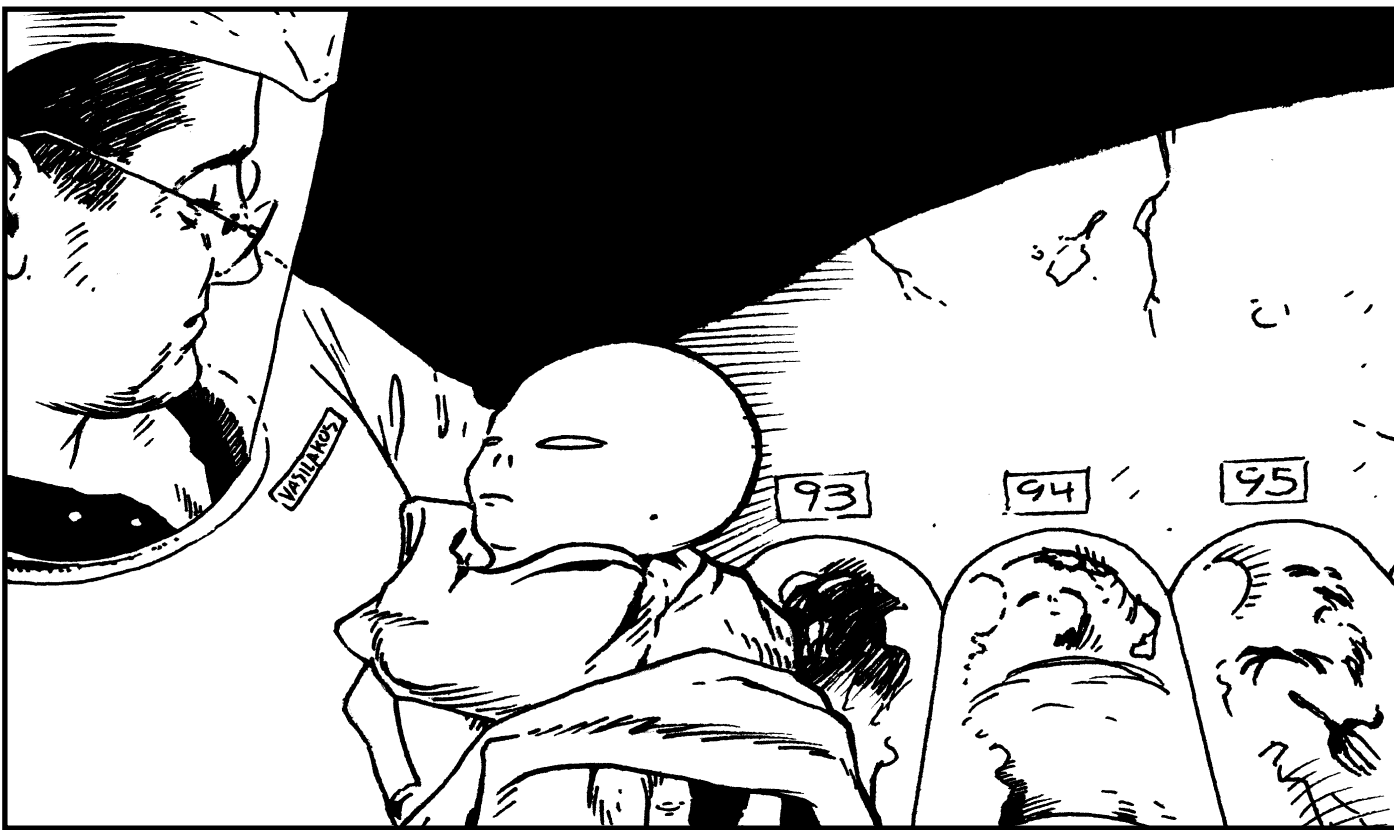
Prerequisite: Influence Science & Research 5oI

An ICU supports only one patient but gives that patient a much better chance of recovering from traumatic wounds than normal hospitalization. It provides a +6 bonus to Medicine and First Aid Tasks (performed by the caregiver).

Life Support
5 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

The purchase of this facility covers life-support generation and basic environment control for the entire site, as long as the site remains environmentally sealed.



Mainframe
5 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Mainframe computers are generally used to process large volumes of data, such as bank transactions, airline reservations, database searches, and the like. A mainframe can directly manage terabytes of data and efficiently sort and search them, but for real scientific number-crunching a supercomputer is needed. A mainframe comes with one user-interface (monitor and data entry devices) or can be accessed through a workstation, a laptop, or a HERMES link.

Pool
2 RP; Space 4

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Pools permit training or practice with swimming, allowing agents to become proficient in SCUBA use or even zero-gravity training using spacesuits.

Radar Array
2 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Paranormal)

Radar emits a narrow beam of radio signals that rotates 360 degrees. The signals bounce off objects, and the array analyzes these signals depending on Radar Signature. Small objects, such as birds, have little RS and are invisible. Flocks of birds may be seen but are usually filtered out by the radar software. Radar can distinguish between structures and vehicles, and tell how fast they are moving. It requires line of sight so cover may provide a penalty to Systems Operations Tasks from –3 to –10. A vehicle's stealth features may apply a penalty from –2 to –6.

This average-quality radar has a range of 50 miles. The unit includes monitoring equipment and viewscreens.

Storage Vault
2 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Regular storage rooms do not cost anything. This is a secure (–3 to Lockpicking skill), airtight, radiation-proof, steel-walled storage facility with approximately eight cubic yards of storage space, for keeping sensitive or dangerous materials. The room has AV 15, DC 60, BV 30.

Suite
2 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

A suite is a two-person group of rooms with kitchen, living area, and bedrooms. Two suites constitute a four-space facility.

Supercomputer
10 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

These machines are used mainly for crunching astronomical reams of numbers. Uses include cryptography, engineering analysis, and heavy-duty scientific research. Whereas a mainframe is useful for searching reams of sorted and catalogued information, it takes a supercomputer to extract information from what appears to be random noise, such as searching for a certain person's voiceprint on every call on a particular cellular network. A mainframe comes with one user-interface (monitor and data entry devices) or can be accessed through a workstation, a laptop, or a HERMES link.

Two supercomputers constitute a four-space facility.

Vehicle Elevator
3 RP; Space 2

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

A vehicle elevator allows a hangar, helipad, or garage to be underground, providing greater security. It also allows the facility to be located where insufficient storage space is normally available, or where it would otherwise draw unwanted attention, such as at the top of an office building.

Workspace
1 or 2 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Whether called a laboratory, workshop, or library, this area can range from a well equipped workbench to a federal depository. When purchased, the workspace must be designated to a specific Craft, Medical, Electronics, Engineering, Humanities, or Science skill. The space is assumed to be equipped with all of the usual devices or materials necessary for one person to perform Tasks in the skill designated. Particularly capital-intensive facilities, such as aerospace workspaces, use the higher cost.

Workspace Addition
+1 or +2 RP per staff; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Additional space is added so more people can work in a given workspace. The cost per additional staff member depends on whether the workspace is particularly capital intensive (physics laboratories, aerospace engineering, etc.).

Workspace Quality
Varies; Space N/A

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Workspaces are rated by the quality of their equipment.

Poor: This workspace uses assets that are out of date, substandard, and broken. All Tasks here suffer a –2 penalty. Apply a –1 RP cost per staff space, to a minimum of one.

Normal: This workspace has no special features or modifiers.

Good: This workspace has advanced assets of superior quality and workmanship. All Tasks here gain a +1 bonus. Apply a +2 RP cost per staff space in the facility.

Quality Rating Excellent: This workspace has cutting-edge, state-of-the-art, and even experimental assets not available to the general public. All Tasks here gain a +3 bonus. Apply a +5 RP cost per staff space.

Quality Rating Superb: This workspace is top of the line in capacities and workmanship. All Tasks here gain a +5 bonus. Apply a +9 RP cost per staff space.

Workstation
1 RP; Space 1

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This powerful desktop computer is more than adequate for most uses, including research, light data processing, and engineering. These are top-of-the-line, multiprocessor systems, an order of magnitude more powerful than a typical home or office system. They can be used as Internet servers if desired, but this raises significant security issues if sensitive data is stored on the machine.

STAFF

Some cells may wish to add personnel with particular specialties. These individuals are generally hired or recruited to fill particular needs of the cell, such as a researcher or a pilot/driver for a particular vehicle. Cell staff are considered a permanent part of the cell, although they may not know the true purpose of the group, the nature or existence of Aegis, or anything about alien visitors. The Aegis Cast Members decide whether their staff is kept in the dark or indoctrinated as full Aegis operatives.

Staff members are detailed below. All Research Staff have Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Constitution 2, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Willpower 3. Operations Staff are the reverse (threes in Physical Attributes, twos in Mental Attributes). They all have Brawling 1 and Drive 1. Specialist skills depend upon the staff member.

RESEARCH STAFF

Academic: 2 RP. Computers 2, Humanities (choose one) or Occult Knowledge 4, Research/Investigation 3.

Computer Specialist: 2 RP. Computer Programming 4, Computers 4.

Doctor: 3 RP. Medicine (choose one) 4, Research/Investigation 3, Science (choose one) 2.

Engineer: 2 RP. Computer Programming 2, Engineering (choose one) 4, Mechanic 3.

Lab Assistant: 1 RP. Computers 2, First Aid 2, Medicine (choose one) or Science (choose one) or Occult Knowledge 2.

Scientist: 2 RP. Computers 2, Research/Investigation 3, Science (choose one) 4.

Technician: 2 RP. Computers 2, Electronics 3, Engineering (choose one) 2, Mechanic 3.

OPERATIONS STAFF

Intelligence: 2 RP. Brawling 2, Guns (Hand Gun) 2, Stealth 3, Surveillance 3.

Driver/Pilot/Sailor: 2 RP. Driving (choose one) or Pilot (choose one) 4, Guns (Hand Gun) 2, Mechanic 3.

Soldier/Mercenary: 2 RP. Brawling 3, Guns (Assault Rifle) 3, Guns (Handgun) 3.

WEAPONS

Weapon damages and other statistics are collected in the Close Combat and Ranged Weapons Tables. They includes improvised weapons that do not require RP expenditures to secure (staff, club, pipe, etc.). Non-weapon attacks and damages are detailed in the Martial Arts section of **Chapter Four: Tradecraft** (see p. 165).

All ranged weapon requisitions come with a supply of regular ammunition. Replacement ammunition in the same quantity may be purchased for one RP.

For all ranged weapons statistics, ballpark figures have been used. Players who desire more specific weapon details should feel free to pencil in more accurate ones. Note that different ammo types (such as hollow-points, armor-piercing, etc.) affect the damage done (see p. 133).

Assault Rifle

1 RP for 5 guns and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Assault rifles are the primary weapons of armed forces worldwide – essentially a standard rifle that can fire either single shots or fully automatic bursts.

Baton

1 RP for 24 clubs

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Batons are short blunt weapons often issued to police and security forces as (usually) nonlethal weapons.

Chemical or Pepper Spray

1 RP for 20 canisters

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

This small aerosol spray canister contains an agent that causes painful skin irritation and temporary blindness if sprayed in a person's face. These canisters are commonly used by law-enforcement officials and letter carriers as an effective means of stopping unwanted aggressors, be they criminals or vicious dogs. Someone who is sprayed suffers effects identical to tear gas, but the inhalation effects last only one second, since the cloud is not persistent. Each canister is good for about 20 "bursts."

Dart Pistol/Rifle

1 RP for 5 guns and 1000 CO_2 darts

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, or Science & Research)

These firearms use compressed gas to fire a dart. Virtually harmless in itself, the dart is used as a vehicle for a drug, usually a tranquilizer. If the dart penetrates the target's armor (if any), the drug is successfully delivered whether the target takes damage or not. The dart delivers a single dose of the drug per hit. The weapon is quiet, only slightly louder than a silenced firearm. The user has great control over the lethality of a hit by varying the drug used.

CLOSE COMBAT WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon Type	Damage	EV	Cost
Baton/Stick, Large	D6(3) x Strength	2	$20
Club, Large/Baseball Bat/Pipe/Chair	D8(4) x Strength&	2	$50
Club/Stick, Small	D6(3) x (Strength – 1)	1	n/a
Knife, Small	D4(2) x (Strength – 1)*	1	$20
Knife, Large	D4(2) x Strength*	1	$50
Knife Huge/Short Sword	D6(3) x Strength*	2	$100
Staff (Short Punch)	D6(3) x Strength	4	$150
Staff (Swing)	D8(4) x (Strength + 1)@	4	$150

* Slash/stab weapon
& Weapon may be used two-handed
@ Weapon must be used two-handed (damage modifiers accounted in formula)

RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon	Range	Damage	Cap	EV	Cost
Dart Pistol	5/10/25/50/100	as drug	1	1	$200
Dart Rifle	5/25/50/100/150	as drug	2	8	$500
Derringer	3/10/20/60/120	D6 x 3(9)	2	1	$300
Stunner, Ranged	1/2/5/7/10	special	10	1	$200
Handgun					
Light (.32 caliber)	3/10/20/60/120	D6 x 2(6)	6–9	1	$500
Medium (9 mm)	3/10/20/60/120	D6 x 4(12)	10–15	1	$500
Heavy (.45 caliber)	3/10/20/60/120	D8 x 4(16)	7–10	2	$1,500
Very Heavy (.44 mag)	4/15/30/90/180	D6 x 6(18)	6–10	2	$1,800
Submachine Gun (9 mm)	3/15/30/100/200	D6 x 4(12)	20–40	6	$1,400
Civilian Rifles#	10/50/150/600/1000				
Light (.22 LR)		D4 x 4(8)	1–10	8	$1,000
Medium (5.56 mm)		D8 x 4(16)	1–10	8	$1,200
Heavy (.30-06)		D8 x 6(24)	1–10	8	$1,400
Shotguns (12 gauge)				8	$1,000
Birdshot	10/30/50/75/100	D6 x 5(15)	1–8		
Buckshot	10/30/50/100/200	D8 x 6(24)	1–8		
Slug	5/50/100/200/300	D8 x 5(20)	1–8		
Assault Rifle (5.56 mm)	10/50/150/600/1000	D8 x 4(16)	20–30	8	n/a
Sniper Rifles					
Light (7.62 mm)	15/75/225/900/1000	D8 x 5(20)	20	10	n/a
Heavy (.50 caliber)	15/75/250/1200/5000	D10 x 6(30)	10	28	n/a
Machine Guns@					
Light (5.56 mm)	10/100/300/1000/3000	D8 x 4(16)	200	22**	n/a
Heavy (.50 caliber)	15/200/400/2000/6000	D10 x 6(30)	100	84&	n/a
Minigun	375/750/1500/3000/6000	D8 x 5(20)	200	100&	n/a
Thrown Knife*	3/5/8/10/13	D4(2) x (Strength – 1)	–	1	$20
Thrown Rock	3/7/10/13/20	D4(2) x Strength	–	–	–

Single shot or semiautomatic
@ Capable of burst and automatic fire
* Slash/stab weapon
** EV includes bipod (1) and ammo (6)
& EV includes tripod (40), making this exclusively a vehicle or stationary weapon

Derringer

1 RP for 5 guns and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Intelligence)

Derringers are very small double-barreled pistols that can be concealed just about anywhere – in a pocket, a purse, even a large wallet. A major benefit of derringers is their concealability. Despite their small size, derringers fire high-caliber rounds with all the stopping power of larger guns. The barrels can be fired one at a time or both at once. Derringers can be obtained in different calibers; in such cases use the damage from a similar-caliber handgun.

Flamethrower

1 RP for 1 gun and 4 fuel tanks

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

This weapon consists of a rifle-sized gun attached to one or more tanks of incendiary gel. The gel is propelled out of the gun and ignited, creating a stream of flame. The burning liquid splatters, runs, and ignites any flammable item. Flamethrower ranges are 30/40/50/60/65 for modern weapons and 10/20/30/40/50 for WWII-era weapons. The unit has an EV 50 and automatically causes medium encumbrance.

Gel may be fired in bursts, and no more than three bursts may be fired in a Turn (each counts as a separate action). If a burst of flaming gel contacts a person, she takes D6(3) points of damage per Turn. The gel may also be sprayed at one or more targets at medium range or less by continually depressing the trigger. The latter expends D6(3) bursts per Turn; each Success Level in the Dexterity and Guns (Flamethrower) Task means one burst hits (the firer decides how many hits are allocated to each target in range). Those engulfed in flaming gel (being hit with three or more bursts) take D6 x 2(6) points of damage per Turn. Flaming gel is very difficult to extinguish. Each tank contains ten "bursts" worth of gel.

Flamethrowers are very vulnerable. Those targeting the tanks suffer a –2 to the Task and must overcome AV 6. Still, penetration almost guarantees explosion. Roll D10; only on a one or two is the wearer safe. Exploding tanks engulf the wearer in flames and hit all those within five yards with a burst. A bulky protective suit (EV 25; automatically causes at least light encumbrance) available to modern-day soldiers reduces damage from the burning gel to one point per Turn. U.S. troops are not equipped with flamethrowers, but those from other countries may be.

Handgun

1 RP for 5 guns and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

The auto pistol has long been the standard sidearm for law-enforcement agencies and the military. It is semiautomatic and fires medium-powered ammunition.

A revolver is a medium-powered, reliable pistol with a revolving six-shot chamber. It has lost popularity of late due to slow speed and ammunition-capacity limitations. This weapon may not have a silencer attached to it.

Knife

1 RP for 24 knives

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

A knife is any short-bladed weapon, including hunting knives, throwing knives, switchblades, and Bowie knives. Damage varies depending upon the size of the knife.

Machine Gun, Heavy

2 RP for 1 gun and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

This very bulky, large-caliber, fully automatic weapon is generally carried by two people and fired from a tripod or mounted on a vehicle. The heavy machine gun is a standard infantry support weapon and is effective against both personnel and lightly armored vehicles.

Machine Gun, Light

1 RP for 1 gun and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Law Enforcement, or Military)

This large fully automatic rifle that can be carried by a single person but is usually fired resting on a bipod or mounted on a vehicle. Light machine guns are common heavy support weapons among infantry units due to their great firepower.

Minigun

2 RP for 1 gun and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

A minigun is a high-caliber machine gun capable of an incredibly high rate of fire (2,000–4,000 rounds per minute!). In order to avoid overheating and warping the barrel of the gun, a minigun incorporates six rotating barrels. The minigun is generally mounted on a vehicle, usually a helicopter, but may be used with a tripod. Due to its rate of fire, the minigun is incapable of single-shot fire. The ammo capacity listed is for a carried minigun. When mounted on a vehicle, the ammo is usually a belt of 2,000+ rounds.

Rifle
1 RP for 5 guns and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

This represents any of the high-caliber, semiautomatic rifles in common use by both civilians and the military. Rifles are very accurate over long distances, particularly when incorporating telescopic sights.

Shotgun
1 RP for 5 guns and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Any of a number of single-barreled or double-barreled shotguns. All shotguns can fire either shot shells (buck or bird) or slug shells.

Stunner, Hand
1 RP for 10 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

A hand stunner is a small self-defense weapon that delivers an electrical shock through contact with two small metal probes. The intended victim must make a Difficult Constitution Test to avoid being stunned; if stunned, she remains so for as long as the weapon is in contact and D6(3) additional Turns. The hand stunner is powered by an integral rechargeable battery; essentially, it has unlimited ammo.

Stunner, Ranged
1 RP for 5 guns

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

The ranged stunner is a small pistol that is used by law-enforcement agencies and security forces to subdue violent individuals. The pistol fires two small barbed darts that remain connected to the pistol by a thin conductive wire. The darts will penetrate normal clothing but not armor. On contact, the stunner sends a jolt of electricity down the wire, forcing the target to make a Difficult Constitution Test to avoid being stunned as long as the darts are connected. Even if the roll is successful, the target will be stunned for the next D6(3) Turns. As long as the darts stay attached to the target, the shooter may send more jolts down the wire (expending charges but requiring no roll to hit). Ranged stunners hold two darts and a rechargeable battery good for 10 electric jolts.

Submachine Gun
1 RP for 5 guns and 5,000 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Military)

Submachine guns are in common use by paramilitary and special ops teams worldwide because of their rate of fire and small size. The submachine gun is a short-barreled, fully automatic carbine often fitted with a folding stock to allow greater concealment and freedom of movement.

EXPLOSIVES TABLE

Weapon	Range	EV
Thrown Grenade	3/7/10/13/20	1
Grenade Launcher (hand-held)	30/50/100/200/350	4
Grenade Launcher (vehicle)	40/80/150/300/500	88
Missile, Light	100/500/1000/2000/2500	25
Missile, Medium	10-20 miles	#
Rocket Launcher	10/30/50/100/150	10

Explosive Type	Ground Zero	General Effect	Maximum Range
C-4 (1.25 lbs)	2 yards	5 yards	10 yards
Claymore Mine	5 yards	12 yards	40 yards
Dynamite (stick)	3 yards	10 yards	20 yards
Grenade, 40 mm	2 yards	6 yards	10 yards
Grenade, 40 mm AP	1 yard	4 yards	6 yards
Grenade, 40 mm HEDP	1 yard	6 yards	10 yards
Grenade, Defensive	2 yards	6 yards	10 yards
Grenade, Incendiary	1 yard	3 yards	6 yards
Grenade, Offensive	1 yard	3 yards	5 yards
Missile, Light	1 yard	2 yards	5 yards
Missile, Medium	1 yard	10 yards	20 yards
Rocket, Light	1 yard	2 yards	5 yards
Satchel Charge	10 yards	20 yards	30 yards

Weapon Type	Ground Zero	General Effect	Maximum Range
C-4 (1.25 lbs)	D6 x 6(18)	D6 x 4(12)	D6 x 2(6)
Claymore Mine	D8 x 10(40)	D8 x 6(24)	D8 x 2(8)
Dynamite (stick)	D6 x 4(12)	D6 x 2(6)	D6 x 1(3)
Grenade, 40 mm	D6 x 12(36)	D6 x 10(30)	D6 x 4(12)
Grenade, 40 mm AP	D10 x 6(30)*	D6 x 5(15)	D6 x 3(9)
Grenade, 40 mm HEDP	D10 x 6(30)	D6 x 8 (24)	D6 x 4(12)
Grenade, Defensive	D6 x 10(30)	D6 x 8(24)	D6 x 3(9)
Grenade, Incendiary	D6 x 6(18)	D6 x 4(12)	D6 x 2(6)
Grenade, Offensive	D6 x 8(24)	D6 x 6(16)	D6 x 2(6)
Missile, Light	D10 x 10(50)*	D10 x 2(10)	D6 x 2(6)
Missile, Medium	D10 x 20(100)*	D10 x 5(25)	D6 x 4(12)
Rocket, Light	D10 x 7(35)**	D6 x 5(15)	D4 x 5(10)
Satchel Charge	D6 x 12(36)	D6 x 8(24)	D6 x 4(12)

Can only be carried by vehicles.
* Divide target's AV by two before applying damage, double damage after armor is bypassed.
** Divide target's AV by five before applying damage, double damage after armor is bypassed.

Damage for explosives is dependent upon blast radius, area of effect, etc., as explained in **Chapter Four: Tradecraft**. Damage is doubled if target is in contact with the explosive.

EXPLOSIVES

C-4
1 RP for 250 lbs.

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

C-4 (or plastique) is a malleable, claylike explosive used extensively by the military. Blocks are available in 1.25 and 2.5 lb. sizes but can be broken up for smaller explosions. C-4 can be detonated only by electrical impulse; fire will not work. In fact, C-4 is flammable and will burn without detonating. Additionally, wet C-4 detonates just as easily as dry, making it a truly versatile explosive. Setting C-4 charges is tricky business, though, and requires a Demolitions Task to do properly. *EV:* 1 or 2; *Cost:* $250 or $500.

Claymore Mine
1 RP for 10 mines

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

The Claymore mine is an antipersonnel weapon that fires steel pellets in a 60 degree cone-shaped area in front of it upon detonation. Incidental fragmentation may cover a larger area to the side and rear; most troops take cover before detonating a Claymore. The mine can be triggered either by a remote radio switch or by tripwire. A Demolitions Task is required to set up the mine properly. The cone-shaped area of effect is two yards high and reaches out to almost 50 yards. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $200.

Detonator
1 RP for 50 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Radio detonators are set off from a distance by remote. Timers use a set time then explode. Both detonators can be rigged to explode when tampered with. This takes a Demolitions Task. *EV:* 1 for 2; *Cost:* $50.

Dynamite
1 RP for 500 sticks

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Military)

Dynamite is a common explosive used in demolition, mining, and construction. Industrial dynamite is 80% nitroglycerine absorbed into a clay, earth, or sawdust core. Dynamite is a rather stable explosive that can be detonated only by fire or electrical impulse, but will become inert and useless if it is wet. Setting proper charges requires a Demolitions Task. *EV:* 1 for 2 sticks; *Cost:* $25/stick.

Grenade
1 RP for 40 grenades

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

A small explosive shell designed to be thrown by hand. The exact shape can vary depending on type, but all are about the same size and shape. Each has a pin that is pulled out to arm a short fuse, which is lit when the grenade itself is released. Hand grenades are not interchangeable with the 40 mm grenades used as ammunition for grenade launchers.

Defensive grenades are for use by troops in trenches and other fortifications. They are intended to blow their way through some obstacles, as well as eliminate anyone in the area. Indeed, their blast radius is often greater than the distance they can be thrown and users have to toss them and duck under cover. Offensive grenades are intended for use in the open. Their blast radius is smaller to protect their users.

Grenades use a Strength and Throwing (Sphere) Task. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $100.

Fragmentation: The outer shell of the "frag" grenade is prescored and lined with notched wire designed to fill the blast radius with metal shrapnel.

Incendiary (Thermite): These grenades are primarily used to destroy equipment rather than personnel. When the grenade ignites, it heats up to 4,000° F for 40 seconds, more than enough to burn through half an inch of steel and fuse any moving metal parts together. It also ignites flammables within a two-yard radius and ignites anything in contact with it, including armor. Incendiary grenades produce their own oxygen and will burn underwater.

Smoke: Smoke grenades release a large cloud of colored smoke. The speed at which the smoke is blown around depends on the strength of the wind. Assuming at most a light breeze, the grenade will form a thick cloud of smoke 100 to 150 yards long in about five Turns. This grenade is used for signaling and for creating cover. Its effectiveness is severely reduced with very strong winds. In a windless situation, as inside a building, the smoke will rapidly fill the enclosed area, making vision nearly impossible and breathing difficult.

Stun: Also known as flash-bang grenades, these small explosives produce a brilliant flash of light and a deafening bang. Anyone within three yards (10 yards in an enclosed area) of the impact must make a Consciousness Test with a –8 modifier or become disoriented, suffering a –6 penalty to all actions for D8(4) Turns. Taking precautions, such as looking away or covering ears, may grant a +2 to +4 bonus. Combustibles within the immediate area may be ignited. Flash-bangs are usually cylindrical in shape to allow them to be rolled into a room or down a hallway.

Tear Gas: There are several variations, but most of them immediately cause coughing, choking, and a burning sensation in the eyes and sensitive tissues of the subject. Each canister/grenade dispenses enough gas to affect everyone within a five-yard radius. Anyone within must hold their breath and close their eyes. Suffocation rules are used; if the agent inhales the gas, she takes D10(5) points damage per Turn (to Endurance Points) until unconscious.

Grenades, 40 mm
1 RP for 50 grenades

Prerequisite: Influence Criminal, Law Enforcement, or Military SoI

These are fired from grenade launchers only and may not be used as hand grenades. The grenades resemble large bullets approximately the size of a closed fist. They come in a variety of types as listed below. All grenade launchers have a minimum safe firing range of 30 yards; closer than that, the firer risks being caught in the blast. Launched grenades use a Dexterity and Guns (Launcher) Task. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $100.

AP: Armor-piercing grenades are most effective against hard targets, for breaching barriers and destroying armored vehicles.

Flare: Flare rounds fire a parachute flare into the air which burns for D6 x 4(12) turns while floating down to the ground. While burning, the flare illuminates a 100-yard-diameter area (centered directly below it) with dim, shadowy light. Areas already shadowy or brighter are unaffected. When a flare is fired, anyone who does not take precautions (shielding her eyes) must make a Simple Willpower Test or reflexively look at the flare, temporarily blinding her for the duration of the flare plus D6 x 3(9) Turns.

Flechette: Flechette grenades are vicious antipersonnel weapons that fire a cluster of small steel darts. They inflict D6 x 8(24) slashing/stabbing damage in a 50 yard area.

HEDP: High-explosive dual-purpose rounds are very effective at destroying lightly armored vehicles and breaching barriers. The grenade contains a shaped-explosive warhead.

Smoke: Other than its longer effective range, this grenade is identical to a smoke hand grenade.

Tear Gas: Other than its longer effective range, this grenade is identical to a tear gas hand grenade.

Grenade Launcher
2 RP for 5 launchers and 40 grenades

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Law Enforcement, or Military)

The grenade launcher is a squat, short-barreled shotgun that fires 40 mm grenades accurately over long distances. The weapon holds only a single grenade at a time and breaks open to be loaded like a double-barreled shotgun. *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $600.

Grenade Launcher, Underbarrel
2 RP for 5 launchers and 50 grenades

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

A single-shot 40 mm grenade launcher that is mounted under the barrel of an assault rifle. Underbarrel grenade launchers increase the versatility of an assault rifle. The launcher is fired by its own trigger and loads like a pump action shotgun. *EV:* 3; *Cost:* $600.

Grenade Launcher, Vehicular
2 RP for 1 launcher and 50 grenades

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

An automatic grenade launcher that fires belts of 40 mm grenades. This heavy weapon must be mounted on a vehicle to be fired and is most often found on fast-attack all-terrain vehicles and helicopters. It is designed to fight armored vehicles and can fire up to six grenades per Turn (each shot counts as a separate action). *EV:* 88; *Cost:* n/a.

Missile, Light
1 RP for 1 launcher and 5 missiles

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

This weapon is man-portable and boosts "fire and forget" guidance systems. It has an Accuracy 6, which replaces the gunner's Dexterity and weapon skill totals. Light missiles travel roughly 600 yards per Turn (roughly 950 mph) and must travel at least 100 yards before the guidance system engages. *EV:* 40 (25 for missile); *Cost:* n/a.

Missile, Medium
1 RP for 5 missiles

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

This missile is similar to the light version, except it must travel 500 yards before engaging and does significantly more damage. It may only be fired from vehicles. *EV:* n/a; *Cost:* n/a.

Rocket, Light
2 RP for 1 launcher and 50 rockets

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

Rocket launchers are the last word in heavy weaponry, firing unguided high-explosive shells capable of destroying small buildings and vehicles. The rockets are inherently inaccurate and are completely ineffective against fast-moving targets (aircraft, in particular) or anything smaller than a sedan. Rockets have a speed of 320 yards per Turn. *EV:* 50 (10 for rocket); *Cost:* $3,000 ($500 per rocket).

Rocket Launcher, Disposable
1 RP for 10 launchers

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

The disposable rocket launcher is a single-use device that incorporates a launcher and a rocket in a small, collapsible package. The rocket delivers a warhead very similar to that of a standard rocket launcher, but the compact design of the launcher renders the rocket even more inaccurate (–2 to Guns Tasks). As implied by the name, a disposable rocket launcher cannot be reused. *EV:* 20 (10 for rocket); *Cost:* $2,000.

Satchel Charge
1 RP for 5 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

The satchel charge is a canvas bag containing 16 small blocks of C-4 and a preset timer/radio detonator. The charge is intended for use by individuals with little or no Demolitions skill. To this end, the use of a satchel charge requires a Demolitions Task with a +4 bonus. Though the satchel charge is not tailored to any specific need, it makes an excellent tool for teams in need of crude demolitions capability. *EV:* 20; *Cost:* $3,000.

Ammunition

Armor-piercing Bullets
+1 RP to ammunition cost

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

AP bullets are steel-jacketed rounds coated in Teflon and specifically designed to defeat body armor. Armor-piercing rounds are available for all small arms. Armor-piercing rounds halve any Armor or Barrier Value in their path, but the damage inflicted is not modified.

Hollow-point Bullets
+1 RP to ammunition cost

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal or Military)

An expanding bullet creates a greater wound cavity and tends to spend more of its energy inside the victim's body as the bullet flattens and mushrooms. Armor can easily stop these bullets. Double any Armor and Barrier Value between the target and the bullet, but any damage that gets through is tripled.

Tracer Bullets
+1 RP to ammunition cost

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement or Military)

Tracer rounds have incendiary material on the backs of the bullets, making the path of a bullet visible to the naked eye. The bullet's trajectory appears as a brief, luminous red line, or trace. When tracer bullets are fired from a fully automatic weapon in a long burst, apply a +1 bonus to aiming rolls. The key disadvantage to tracer rounds is that the bullets are highly visible and give away the shooter's position.

Combat Accessories

Briefcase MP
1 RP for 1 unit and 500 rounds

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal or Intelligence)

This apparently standard leather corporate briefcase is in fact a weapon system for covert urban operations. A standard machine pistol is built into the briefcase, which is armored. To fire the machine pistol, the shooter holds a safety catch on the bottom of the case with one hand, braces the case against her chest, and pulls a concealed trigger on the briefcase's handle with her other hand. Lacking any sights, the briefcase is rather hard to fire accurately (–1 to Guns Tasks). It is recommended that operatives load the machine pistol with tracer ammo, in order to increase their chances of hitting (removing the penalty). The machine pistol built into the case is normal in every way and may be removed easily and fired as a normal weapon; use submachine gun ranges and damage. *AV:* 10; *DC:* 30; *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $1,500.

Flashlight Mount
1 RP for 20 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

This small flashlight attaches to the barrel of a gun. The flashlight's switch is wired to the gun's trigger so that as long as your finger is on the trigger, the light is on. This can be fitted to any firearm from pistol to assault rifle in size. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $50.

Gas Mask
1 RP for 10 masks

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This is a rubber mask that filters out toxic gases such as smoke, tear gas, and most nerve gases. It protects the eyes, nose, and mouth (the areas most vulnerable to toxic gases). Wearing the mask restricts the wearer's vision, imposing a –2 penalty to all Perception Tests and Notice Tasks. *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $200.

Laser Sight
1 RP for 10 sights

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

This low-power laser is mounted on a firearm and projects a small red dot parallel to the gun barrel. The sight lets the shooter see where the barrel is pointing, giving her +1 on shooting rolls. The unit is ineffective at more than 200 yards. A laser sight may be mounted on any small arm. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $80.

Silencer
1 RP for 10 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, or Military)

When attached to the end of a semiautomatic or automatic firearm, a silencer greatly reduces the sound of a gunshot. It penalizes Perception Tests to notice gunshots, depending on the weapon (light rifle –6; pistol –4; rifle –3; submachine gun –2; automatic rifle or machine gun –1). Firing a short burst with a silencer burns out the silencer on a dice roll of one. A full-auto burst ruins the silencer. *EV:* 1 (pistol, SMG, or .22 rifle), 2 (other rifles), 3 (machine guns). *Cost:* $300.

Starlight Scope
1 RP for 5 sights

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

A starlight scope functions as a regular telescopic sight but negates any penalties for poor lighting. A starlight scope is much larger than a normal telescopic scope, however, and may only be mounted on rifles. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $900.

Telescopic Sight
1 RP for 10 sights

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

A telescopic sight reduces the apparent range to a target when it is mounted on top of a firearm. These are fixed power scopes that reduce the range penalties by two categories. For example, a target normally considered at long range is viewed as short range, so the –3 penalty to hit is negated. Telescopic sights do not affect damage reductions due to long or extreme range (see p. 168). *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $300.

Tripflares
1 RP for 100 flares

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Military)

These small warning flares are triggered by a tripwire. They are not bright enough to blind anyone and will not provide substantial light to the area. They are generally used to warn of an approaching someone or something. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $10.

SURVEILLANCE

Audio bugs
1 RP for 24 bugs

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Audio bugs are tiny microphones with radio transmitters that are used extensively in surveillance operations. Even the largest bugs are no larger than a shirt button and are therefore easily hidden nearly anywhere. They run on internal batteries good

for 72 hours of constant use, and they activate only when there are data to transmit, so their actual useful life is often much longer. Modern bugs are very sensitive and can pick up a whisper at 15 yards. The transmitter has a range of roughly a mile. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $50.

Audio/video bugs
1 RP for 12 bugs

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Audio/video bugs are advanced surveillance equipment that function very similarly to an audio bug, with the added function of an integrated video camera. Despite the added electronics, AV bugs are often only moderately larger than audio-only bugs and their batteries last just as long. AV bugs transmit data as long as there is sufficient light to see, regardless of whether anything is going on at the scene. This makes the effective life of an AV bug much shorter. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $200.

Audio Recorder
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This device is a professional-quality digital audio recorder that can record from an integral microphone or from any number of audio receivers such as bugs, wire taps, headset and shotgun microphones, or a HERMES link. The recorder has roughly 60 hours worth of storage space, but additional storage devices can be linked. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $300.

Bug Detector
1 RP for 3 units

Prerequisite: Influence Any SoI

A small hand-held device that registers the transmission of any active audio or AV bugs within ten feet. Since it detects only transmissions, inactive bugs or bugs that only record and do not transmit will remain undetected. *EV:* 2/1; *Cost:* $1,000.

Camera
1 RP for 4 cameras

Prerequisite: Influence Any SoI

This is a professional-quality digital camera with all accessories, including telephoto lenses, tripods, filters, and flashes. The cameras vary in size from larger than normal to miniscule. They store the images digitally in a chip or smart-card and allow easier manipulation and computer enhancement. Depending upon the resolution of the files, the camera can store between 100-200 images or short moving sequences. All camera come with interface cables allowing digital storage units to be attached. This cameras are a substantial upgrade from that included in the standard HERMES link. *EV:* 1-2; *Cost:* $750.

In addition to the standard camera, several specialty models are available, though only a skilled photographer will be familiar with their use. Each additional function adds +1 RP to the cost of the base unit.

Infrared: Infrared cameras photograph using the infrared spectrum of light instead of the visible spectrum. This allows monochrome photographs to be taken in total darkness using an integral infrared flash. The photographer is able to view the scene through the camera's integral infrared viewfinder.

Micro: These cameras are designed for covert operations. They hold up to 50 images yet are no larger than a flash drive. Micro cameras are sometimes built into larger objects such as briefcases and pocketbooks.

Starlight: Starlight cameras use light in the visible spectrum but intensify it, making it possible to take clear photos with only minimal light. They produce black and white photographs only. Pictures may be taken in any light at all, no matter how dim.

Submersible: This camera functions exactly as a normal camera, except that the casing is fully waterproof and may be used under water. The camera is capable of normal operation in depths well exceeding standard SCUBA diving allowances.

Thermographic: Thermographic cameras take pictures of heat sources instead of light. Areas of the photo that radiate a particular temperature range are assigned a corresponding color. Colors in the red end of the spectrum represent higher temperatures and cooler areas appear as shades of blue.

Digital Storage Media
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This paperback book-sized (and getting smaller every year) device can store any kind of digital data, from pictures to video to audio to programs. Each unit can hold 100 hours of high resolution video (other data takes up far less space). It can be linked to any number of sources, including a remote video camera, audio receiver, or even a HERMES link. If connected to a computer equipped with image-processing software, it allows operators to doctor images to show just about anything they like (Electronic Surveillance skill is used for this purpose). *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $100.

Headset Microphone
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This is a single earphone with built-in, forward-facing microphone. These headsets are often used by SWAT assault teams when infiltrating a building. They provide a +2 bonus to any Perception Task, providing the source of noise is in front of the wearer. These units are not tied to any specific communications device, unlike the one included in the standard HERMES link. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $400.

Infrared Flashlight
1 RP for 12 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Just as a flashlight projects visible light, the infrared flashlight projects a beam of light in the infrared (IR) range of the spectrum, which is normally invisible to humans. Used in conjunction with infrared goggles or cameras, it provides the same lighting a normal flashlight would but is undetectable by humans without IR-vision devices. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $150.

Infrared Goggles
1 RP for 10 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

These goggles allow the wearer to see in the infrared spectrum instead of the normal visual spectrum. The wearer can view a clear monochrome image of her surroundings, even in complete darkness, providing she has a source of infrared light (such as a flashlight or spotlight). IR goggles do not restrict vision as night-vision goggles do. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $250.

Laser Eavesdropper
1 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

The laser eavesdropper is a vaguely gun-shaped device that fires a low-powered laser. When the laser is bounced off a window, it "reads" the vibrations of the glass like a speaker and can reproduce the sounds inside the room exactly. The laser beam degrades slightly over distance, but the eavesdropper can still be used up to a range of five miles, providing line of sight can be acquired. Because the laser eavesdropper must be kept very still it may not be used from or targeted at moving vehicles. *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $2,000.

Night-Vision Goggles
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Night-vision goggles operate in much the same way starlight telephoto lens and rifle sights do, by amplifying existing, although minimal, light. The goggles allow the wearer to see clearly in near-complete darkness, providing any light is available at all, regardless how dim. The goggles do restrict the wearer's field of vision, however. They impose a –1 penalty to

all visual Perception Tests and Notice Tasks, although there are no penalties due to darkness. They run on their own battery with a 12-hour lifetime, but fuel cells are being developed that would last for days. *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $3,000.

Radar, Portable
1 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Military, Science & Research)

Designed for perimeter surveillance, this smaller-sized radar can be set on its tripod or mounted on a vehicle. It can be manned by a live operated or set to scan a 120-degree sector and report its finding to a remote control station. The radar has a range of 2000 yards against personnel and 3000 against vehicles. As cover is a huge concern, any Perception and Systems Operations Tasks should be modified as follows: light cover –3, medium cover –5, heavy cover –8, total cover –10. The Task suffers a –1 per 300 yards between it and the target, and gains a +5 if the target is moving faster than five yards per Turn.

The entire unit fits within a briefcase sized metal box and includes a tripod, remote transceiver, two headsets, antennae and battery with vehicle adapter. It takes roughly two minutes to set up. *EV:* 24; *Cost:* $5000.

Remote Monitor
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Science & Research)

Remote monitors are large-screen, high-resolution displays built for viewing images transmitted by video cameras, AV bugs, satellite imagery, HERMES link, or any other source of visual data. A single monitor may be linked to several sources simultaneously, allowing the operator to switch quickly between them. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $200.

Shotgun Microphone
1 RP for 2 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

The shotgun microphone is a large hand-held parabolic mike used by broadcast news teams as well as surveillance agencies. Its name comes from the mike's cone-shaped area of effect, similar to the spread of shotgun pellets. The mike is extremely sensitive over long distances (+2 bonus to Perception Tasks out to 200 yards) but also rather bulky and difficult to conceal. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $1,000.

Starlight Telescope
1 RP for 2 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This is a high-tech variant of the standard telescope described below. The starlight scope allows crystal-clear viewing up to a 10-mile distance even in the dead of a cloud-covered night. The magnification is x15, for a +2 bonus to Perception Tasks. The only drawback is that the unit is restricted to displaying monochrome images, just as any night-vision apparatus. *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $800.

Telescope
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This small (approximately two feet long) telescope is useful for long-distance surveillance, providing a clear view up to 10 miles away. The telescope is mounted on a gyro-stabilized tripod for clear and steady viewing even at extreme range. It includes an integral laser range-finder that displays inside the scope's view. The magnification is x15, for a +2 bonus to Perception Tasks. *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $300.

Tracking Bugs
1 RP for 12 bugs and locators

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Tracking bugs are advanced transmitters, small and discreet enough to be hidden easily on a subject or vehicle. The transmitter gives off a signal in a one-mile radius that can be detected and tracked by a small hand-held locator, a laptop, or a HERMES link. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $200.

Video Camera
1 RP for 3 units

Prerequisite: Influence Any SoI

These are large, professional-quality digital video cameras used by television news crews and direct-to-video filmmakers. The video camera is capable of professional-quality production, but only in the hands of a skilled videographer (Surveillance or Electronic Surveillance skill). The camera requires a medium to record to (digital storage, tape, or DVD) but is capable of transmitting its picture to a receiver up to a quarter-mile away.

Video cameras are also available (micro, submersible, infrared, starlight, and thermographic) that function identically to the corresponding film cameras. One minor exception is the micro video camera, which is limited to transmitting its picture to be recorded elsewhere. *EV:* 6; *Cost:* $2,000.

Wiretap
1 RP for 12 taps

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Wiretaps used to be small electronic devices that could be attached to hard-wired communications lines in moments. The listener could then eavesdrop on any telephone conversation transmitted through that line from roughly a quarter of a mile away. With the advent of digital communications exchanges, software is used to isolate the conversation(s) desired and a copy is stored wherever the operator desires. Such a tap is impossible to detect; it may only be avoided by scrambling and encryption. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $80.

Wiretap Detector
1 RP for 5 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

This small device measures line impedance of a phone line to detect the presence of a wiretap. It detects only that the line is being monitored and gives no indication as to who is monitoring the line or where the tap is placed. It also works only on old-fashioned hard-line taps. Digital communications interception may not be detected. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $1,000.

Intrusion Equipment

Breaking & Entering (B&E) Kit
1 RP for 4 kits

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

This kit is a sturdy, black nylon duffel bag containing a number of tools useful for surreptitious but often illegal entry into a building. The toolkit includes such burglar basics as bolt cutters, pry bars, a glass-cutter, a hacksaw, and an industrial-strength flashlight. *EV:* 8; *Cost:* $1,000.

Electronic Lockpick
1 RP for 2 sets

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

An electronic lockpick set consists of a small pack of electronic tools necessary to bypass most electronic keypad and card-key locks. Without such tools, lockpick attempts against these locks are virtually impossible. The tools are not really lockpicks as such, as they are useless against standard, nonelectronic locks. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $1,500.

Lockpick
1 RP for 5 sets

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Lockpicks are traditional locksmith and burglar's tools. The set consists of a number of picks and tension bars that allow someone skilled in their use to open virtually any keyed lock. The picks are carried rolled into a soft black cloth. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $200.

Lockpick Gun
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

The lockpick gun is a vaguely pistol-shaped device that picks locks automatically, with no skill needed from the user. Treat the gun as if it had a Lock Picking 5 skill. Used almost exclusively by police forces, lockpick guns are usually illegal to own without a permit and are relatively difficult to obtain in any case. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $1,000.

ELECTRONICS

Cell Phone
1 RP for 6 phones

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

While any character can buy a cellular phone at any electronics outlet, phones acquired though Resource Points are registered to government organizations or are electronic "clones" of legitimate phones. Therefore, the cell will never be charged for their use and need not fear the units being associated with anyone in the cell. (Note that an agent's HERMES link phone is registered in his name so that he can receive legitimate "day job" communications.) Cell phones are incredibly convenient, but they are also little more than specialized radios. As a result, it is exceedingly simple to eavesdrop on cell phone conversations (see p. 104). *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $200.

GPS Terminal
1 RP for 5 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

This device is a small hand-held unit that receives data from the orbiting satellites that comprise the Global Positioning System. The terminal's display computes and displays the unit's position by longitude and latitude accurately to within a few feet. The latest HERMES links have rendered these units obsolete except in limited circumstances. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $500.

Laptop Computer
1 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This laptop is a top-of-the-line model which interfaces easily with numerous electronic devices. The computer is installed with the software and hardware needed to communicate with any network, telecommunication system, or auxiliary device in use today. The computer can run on its internal batteries for about four hours, or it can be plugged into any outlet for unlimited use. When plugged into a wall outlet, the batteries take about six hours to recharge. *EV:* 8; *Cost:* $2,500.

Radio, Base
2 RP for 1 radio

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

The base radio is a large, stationary radio transceiver with a tall antenna similar to those found at radio stations and military listening posts. Maximum range is usually about 300 miles but can vary depending on weather, altitude, and interference. In an age of cellular communications, radios are used only in rare circumstances. When they are, scramblers are highly recommended. *EV:* 20; *Cost:* $2,000.

Radio, Hands-free
1 RP for 12 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement or Military)

This is a small, concealable radio transceiver with a range of a quarter of a mile. The speaker is worn in the ear like a hearing aid, and the microphone is attached to the wearer's clothing, usually the lapel or collar. The radio is voice-activated and turns itself on and off as necessary. Members of bodyguard and security forces commonly use these radios to keep in touch with one another. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $200.

Radio, Personal
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Personal radios are commonly used by groups of people who need to keep in close contact over medium distances, such as police officers and park rangers. The units either conform to the typical "walkie-talkie" look or are worn on the belt and connected to a separate handset microphone. The radio transmitter/receiver has an effective range of about a mile. Again, cell phones have largely replaced these units, and many have their own built-in personal radios. Again, scramblers are recommended. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $150.

Satellite Phone
1 RP for 1 Phone

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

This specially designed mobile phone usually sports a larger antenna. It allows audio signals to be bounced off communications satellites for worldwide communication. Intelligence agencies always scramble these phones to avoid exposing operatives in the field. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $3,000.

Satellite Uplink
1 RP for 1 link

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

A small satellite dish that allows a stationary radio unit to send and receive signals from an orbiting satellite. The satellite can relay the signals to any other radio unit that is also connected to a satellite uplink. Although portable, the uplink is still rather bulky and is generally installed on a vehicle. *EV:* 8; *Cost:* $3,000.

Scrambler
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

The scrambler can be attached to any radio transceiver (including a cell phone), enabling the user to send encrypted messages intelligible only to another radio connected to a scrambler with the same settings. A computer attached to a radio and a scrambler can decipher scrambled transmissions providing it can intercept about 15 minutes of transmissions. To defeat this, teams using scrambled transmissions often change the scrambler settings at regular intervals. *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $1,000.

Signal Jammer
1 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

A signal jammer attached to a radio transmitter allows a trained operator to jam specific radio frequencies within the range of the transmitter by overwhelming that frequency with garbage transmissions. Any receiver or cell phone within range tuned into that frequency will pick up only static. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $1,000.

Vehicle Communications Link
1 RP for 2 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

A vehicle communications package is a radio/phone transceiver installed in a vehicle that runs off the vehicle's battery. Vehicle radios have a range of approximately 30 miles, but their phones link up to the cellular network and are as extensive as it is. *EV:* 25; *Cost:* $1,000.

Radar, Portable
3 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

This is a small radar unit shaped like a squat cylinder three feet in diameter. It is attached to a small display unit and has a range of five miles. Solid objects such as trees and buildings block the radar unit's line of sight, so care must be taken to place the unit where it will be most effective. As always with radar, remember that a group of small objects flying close together will appear as one large object. *EV:* 20; *Cost:* $15,000.

Robot
2 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

Modern-day robots can be built for any task, even very complex ones. With a skilled remote operator, robots are capable of almost anything. Three specific types are presented here. Chroniclers and players should feel free to design their own as needed (RP costs or skill Tasks necessary are at the Chronicler's discretion). A full robot creation system is presented in the *Conspiracies* sourcebook.

Telemetry robots are remotely piloted machines designed for dangerous situations such as bomb disposal, or for areas with dangerous levels of radiation or biohazard. They are usually composed of a large tracked chassis, about three feet long and half as wide. They feature a video camera and a long manipulator arm, bringing its height to about five feet. The video camera transmits a constant picture back to the operator, who controls the robot through a small, portable control unit. The control unit consists of a small video screen and two joysticks used to steer the robot, direct its video camera, and control the manipulator arm.

The robot is rather slow but is capable of negotiating most obstacles, including staircases. The manipulator arm is generally a simple two- or three-fingered claw that is surprisingly strong (Strength 4) and precise. Many telemetry robots employed by law-enforcement agencies also possess the ability to mount a weapon linked to the robot's video camera. The weapon of choice is a shotgun or small water cannon (range 1/2/5/10/25; D4 x 3(6) Endurance Point damage; cap 10). The robot's skill with either weapon is three.

The range of a telemetry robot's control unit is half a mile, which may be boosted through normal communications equipment. If the robot loses contact with the control unit for any reason, the robot will stand still and take no action on its own, as it has no intelligence or autonomous programming. The device includes the control unit and a submachine gun/water cannon for those robots capable of mounting one. *EV:* n/a; *Cost:* $30,000.

Submersible robots generally assist marine research teams exploring hazardous areas underwater. They look like small, yard-long submarines and operate in much the same manner and have largely similar capabilities as the land-based robots. For obvious reasons, they have no need for a mounted shotgun or water cannon. The robot's speed, range, and manipulator arm strength are the same as its land-based cousin. The robot comes with a control unit. *EV:* n/a; *Cost:* $30,000.

Photo recon drones are small, remotely piloted aircraft used for covert aerial reconnaissance. The drone resembles a small prop airplane painted with appropriate camouflage. The drone's small size and nearly silent prop engines make it very difficult to detect. It is piloted via a control unit with a powerful transmitter, giving the drone a 50-mile range. Generally, only a camera of some sort is mounted on the drone. The larger frame of the recon drone can, however, mount additional surveillance and photography equipment, as necessary. It may also be packed with explosive and flow into a target. The plane comes with a control unit. *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $10,000.

SOFTWARE

Unless otherwise noted, each of the following software systems is available in three separate versions, each tailored to a particular grade of computer: Workstation/laptop, mainframe, and supercomputer. Usually a single copy of any of the software programs can be installed on any number of individual computers, but programs built for one system cannot be run on other platforms.

CAD/CAM

1 RP for 1 version

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

CAD/CAM stands for Computer Assisted Design and Computer Assisted Manufacturing. These advanced programs function for engineering projects much the same as expert systems do for scientific research. Each CAD/CAM program is geared toward a specific branch of engineering, such as electrical or mechanical. The program will provide a bonus to any applicable Engineering Task. Workstation/laptop versions grant a +1 bonus, mainframe programs give a +2 bonus, and supercomputer programs both give a +2 bonus and reduce the time required to complete any project by half. In order to take advantage of the software, an Intelligence and Computers Task must be made. Mainframe and supercomputer CAD/CAM programs can also be queried on basic engineering questions by succeeding at a Computers Task. A mainframe program's answers will be less complete than those of a supercomputer.

Global Mapping

1 RP for 1 version

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Global mapping software contains detailed, up-to-date maps of every explored area on the planet. An Intelligence and Computers Task can bring up a terrain map of any desired location. If the computer running the software is connected to a GPS terminal, it will show the terminal's location as a continuously updated dot on the map accurate to within three yards. If the computer can be connected to two radio receivers, the global mapping software can triangulate on any signal both receivers can pick up and pinpoint the location of the transmitter. As long as the signal is clear, the software can continuously update the location on the map. In order to triangulate on radio signals, the operator must succeed at an Intelligence and Computers Task and also have some level of Electronics or Electronic Surveillance skill. Workstation/laptop versions of this software can track only a single radio signal, but mainframe and supercomputer versions can keep tabs on an unlimited number of radio targets.

Image Processing

1 RP for 1 version

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, or Science & Research)

The image-processing program allows an operator to doctor photographs and videotape with a very high level of quality. Note that the original film, videotape, or digital images are unaltered by this process and if left intact could provide damning evidence. Intelligence and Computers Task and Perception and Electronic Surveillance Task rolls are necessary; workstation/laptop versions grant a +1 bonus, mainframe programs give a +2 bonus, and supercomputer programs both give a +2 bonus and reduce the time required to complete any project by half. The software will also help determine if a photograph or videotape is genuine or has been faked. A Resisted Task is made between the user's Intelligence and Computers and those of the manipulator. The hardware needed to scan photographs and connect the computer to input devices is included in the package.

Science Expert System
1 RP for 1 version

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, Paranormal, or Science & Research)

Expert systems are valuable scientific research tools that incorporate large databases of information with powerful research tools and "expert" knowledge systems. Each expert system is tailored for a particular Medicine or Science skill, such as Biochemistry, Diagnosis, Genetics, and Nuclear Physics. Criminology and Forensics systems are available to those with Influence (Law Enforcement). Systems for nontraditional sciences such as Parapsychology and Occultism are also available.

When aiding in research, the expert system provides a bonus to the Task roll. The bonus itself depends on the type of computer that is running the program. Workstation/laptop versions provide a +1 bonus to the roll, mainframes add +2 to the roll, and supercomputers both add +2 to the roll and halve the time needed for that phase of research. In order to gain the benefit of the program's bonus, a member or members of the research team must succeed at an Intelligence and Computers Task.

The more powerful mainframe and supercomputer versions of the expert system software can answer basic questions from nonscientists though an advanced query system. Mainframe programs can answer questions as a scientist with a suitable skill of three, supercomputers at level four. In order to gain a useful answer, the individual posing the question must succeed at an Intelligence and Computers Task.

SCIENTIFIC RESOURCES

Biohazard Spacesuit
2 RP for 1 suit

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

These suits are pressurized, airtight, and very bulky. They bear more than a passing resemblance to an astronaut's spacesuit. A biohazard spacesuit provides personal Biohazard Level 4 protection and has its own battery-powered air supply and filtration unit that will provide uncontaminated air for eight hours. Regardless of Strength, wearing a Biohazard Spacesuit causes medium encumbrance. *EV:* 40; *Cost:* $2,500.

Biohazard Suit
1 RP for 25 suits

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

This large one-size-fits-all plastic overall includes rubber boots, gloves, and gas mask. A biohazard suit protects the wearer from harmful gases, microorganisms, chemicals, and weak acids. If any weapon succeeds in hitting and doing any amount of damage, the suit's integrity is breached and it must be patched immediately to avoid contamination. For this reason, scientists working in hazardous environments often wear precut lengths of duct tape attached to the legs of the suit to act as instant patches. Regardless of Strength, wearing a biohazard suit lightly encumbers the wearer. *EV:* 30; *Cost:* $1,000.

Geiger Counter
1 RP for 12 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

The Geiger counter is a small hand-held gauge that measures radiation levels. The unit has no effective range and measures radiation only in the immediate area. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $200.

Quarantine Tent
1 RP for 1 tent

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

This large, inflatable, airtight tent can be used to contain large specimens or individuals suspected of contamination with possibly hazardous agents. The tent is equipped with an airlock to allow safe entrance and exit, and is large enough for four individuals to work comfortably on a single subject. It takes about fifteen minutes to set up completely and includes four biohazard suits. When deflated, the tent is small enough to squeeze into the back of a minivan. *EV:* 100; *Cost:* $3,500.

Radbadge
1 RP for 100 badges

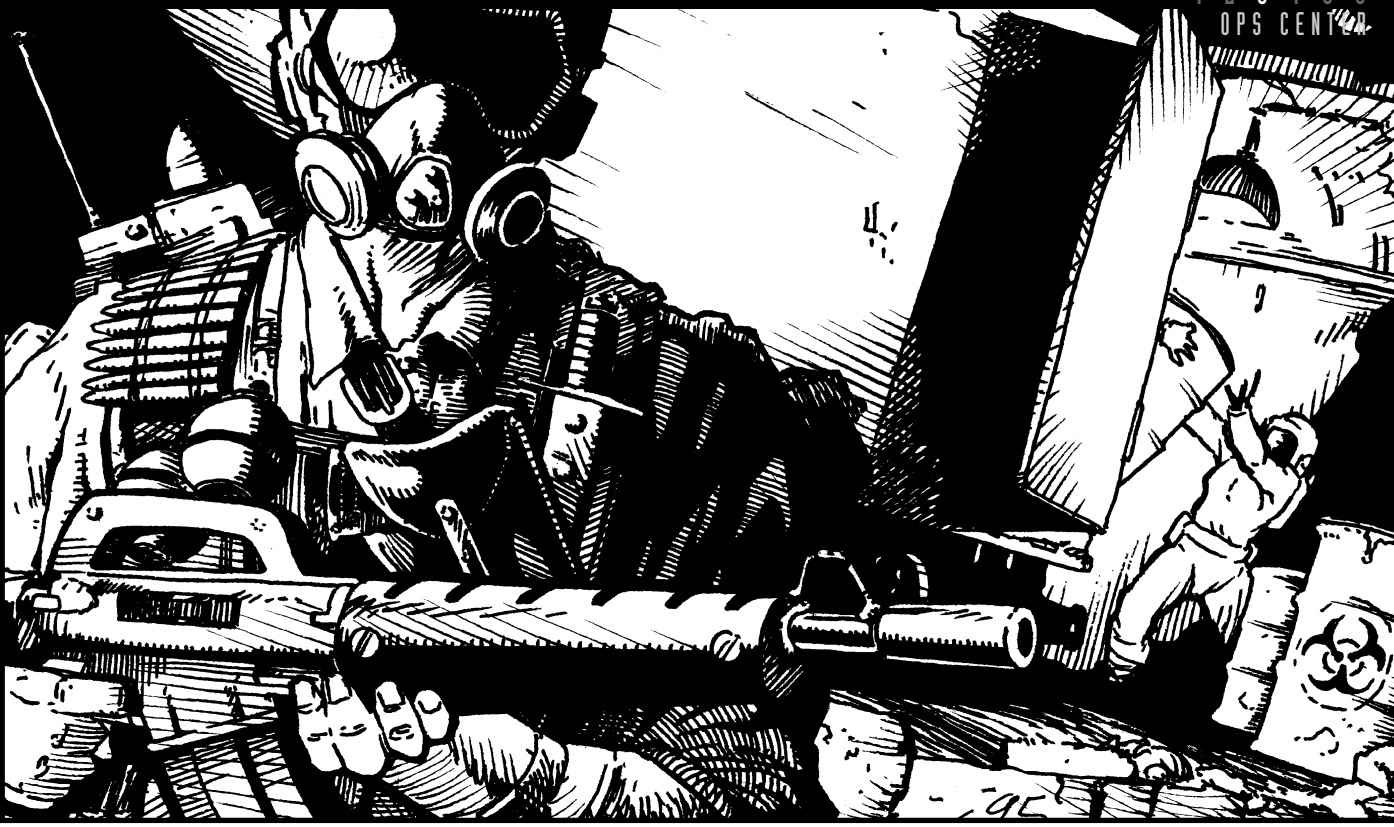
Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

The radbadge is about the size and shape of a conventional nametag, with a large red chemically treated square on it. As the badge is exposed to radiation, the red square gradually turns black, signaling potentially dangerous radiation levels. These items are worn in areas where radioactive materials are stored or used, to warn of possible radiation leaks. Radbadges do not turn red in the absence of radiation and are therefore useful only once. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $25.

Radiation Suit
1 RP for 12 suits

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

Radiation suits are heavy-duty lead-lined suits used to protect workers from lethal levels of ionizing radiation. The suit is fully filtered and enclosed, providing the same protection from chemicals and microorganisms as the biohazard suit. In addition, the lead lining and thick material of the suit protect against levels of radiation and heat that would otherwise be lethal in seconds (up to 2000 rems per hour, see p. 175). The thickness and durability of the suit also grants armor protection. Regardless of Strength, wearing a radiation suit causes medium encumbrance. *AV:* D6 + 4(7); *EV:* 50; *Cost:* $2,500.



Specimen Jars and Collection Tools
1 RP for 12 sets

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This is a set of small sealable specimen jars for holding biological, chemical, or organic specimens, and the tweezers, razors, and glass slides used for collection. *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $100.

MEDICAL RESOURCES

Doctor's Bag
1 RP for 5 bags

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

Having a fully stocked Doctor's Bag at a medical scene gives a +2 bonus to Medicine or First Aid Tasks. Each bag contains antibiotics, epinephrine, tranquilizers, and the like. The bag has supplies for six uses. *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $1,000.

First Aid Kit
1 RP for 25 kits

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This small kit includes bandages, antibiotics, and burn salves, and gives a bonus of +1 to First Aid Tasks. The kit contains enough supplies for six uses. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $100.

Medic's Kit
1 RP for 10 kits

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

This is standard issue equipment for Emergency Medical Technicians, and grants a +2 bonus to First Aid Tasks or Medicine Tasks for stabilization purposes only. The kit contains enough supplies for six uses. *EV:* 6; *Cost:* $250.

Sodium Pentothal
1 RP for 10 vials

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Science & Research)

Sodium pentothal is a narcotic drug inaccurately known as "truth serum." The drug is administered to a subject to relax her and reduce her alertness, thereby increasing the chances that she will reveal information. The term "truth serum" is misleading because the answers the subject gives are not necessarily true. Once sodium pentothal is administered to a subject (requiring a successful Intelligence and Medicine Task; failure renders the subject unconscious), the subject quickly lapses into a state of seminarcotic consciousness, with little control over what she says. The effects of the drug wear off in about five minutes, after which there are no harmful side effects. While under the effects of sodium pentothal, the subject must pass a Difficult Willpower Test to resist answering any question posed to her. If the test fails, the subject must answer the ques-

tion as truthfully as she can, though she need not give out information that was not specifically asked for. Also while under the drug's effect, any physical or mental actions receive a –2 penalty, making it a passable sedative. Attempts to hypnotize a subject under the effects of sodium pentothal receive a +2 bonus. More potent drugs are being developed constantly, but no intelligence agency has revealed the details. A Chronicler may vary a subject's resistance by applying negative modifiers if the interrogator uses such secret drugs. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $100 per dose.

Tranquilizer
1 RP for 10 vials

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Tranquilizers are drugs used to sedate people and animals, usually rendering them unconscious. Most often tranquilizers are administered via dart or syringe, either of which may be loaded with up to six doses. Once the subject has been injected with the tranquilizer, one dose takes effect every two Turns. Every time a dose takes effect, the subject must pass a Consciousness Test with a penalty equal to double the total number of doses that have taken effect to avoid losing consciousness. If the subject passes the Test and remains conscious, all rolls she makes suffer a penalty equal double the number of doses that have taken effect. Once the tranquilizer reaches full effect, one dose will wear off every 15 minutes. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $100 per dose.

Personnel Equipment

Base Camp
1 RP for 1 camp

Prerequisite: Influence (All)

The base camp includes tents, sleeping gear, cooking apparatus, and five days of food for six people. The equipment is lightweight and can be carried easily in backpacks (included) by six individuals and set up or broken down in less than two hours. *EV:* 90; *Cost:* $800.

Binder Strips
1 RP for 500 strips

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Science & Research)

These one-use plastic strips, in common use by many police departments nationwide, are simply strong plastic loops that are tightened around the subject's wrists and must be cut to release the subject. A knife or Escape Task is required to get free. They can be broken using a Difficult Strength Test with a –3 modifier, but D6 + 8(9) points of damage is suffered as the plastic cuts into the subject's wrists. *EV:* neg; *Cost:* $20 for 50.

Body Armor
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement or Military)

This standard body armor is worn by SWAT teams and military units, and cannot be concealed. Regardless of Strength, it imposes medium encumbrance. *AV:* (D8 x 3) + 18(30); *EV:* 12; *Cost:* $2000.

Bomb Suit
1 RP for 2 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement or Military)

This unconcealable armor includes rigid plates for maximum protection. Regardless of Strength, it imposes heavy encumbrance. *AV:* (D10 x 5) + 20(45); *EV:* 20; *Cost:* $6000.

Bulletproof Briefcase
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Intelligence)

This looks like a standard stylish leather briefcase, but it can take a lot of punishment. The case is indispensable for tremendously secret documents ("breaking" the briefcase substantially destroys the contents as well) and the occasional impromptu shield from gunfire. *AV:* 15; *DC:* 40; *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $500.

Camouflage Fatigues
1 RP for 24 suits

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

Stealth Tasks gain a +1 bonus when wearing fatigues appropriate for the terrain: forest, jungle, desert, arctic, and night (gray). *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $400

Climbing Gear
1 RP for 6 sets

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

Ropes, pitons, crampons, hammers, picks, and grappling hooks are all provided. Without suitable climbing gear, Chroniclers may penalize Climbing Tasks in difficult terrain. *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $200.

Cold Weather Gear
1 RP for 5 outfits

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Cold weather gear includes a parka, insulated coverall, boots, gloves, goggles, and facemask. It decreases the temperature effects of cold by two levels to a minimum of normal (e.g., extremely cold becomes cold, see p. 110). *EV:* 8; *Cost:* $200.

Diving Suit
2 RP for 1 suit

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

These large, pressurized exoskeletons contain enough oxygen for eight hours. The grippers on the suit are limited to basic grasping and lifting. Regardless of Strength, the suit inflicts heavy encumbrance. *AV:* (D6 x 2) + 14(20); *EV:* 50; Cost $4,000.

Drysuit
1 RP for 6 suits

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Diving drysuits reduce cold temperature effects by two levels to a minimum of normal (see p. 100). *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $1,000.

Flare Gun
1 RP for 10 guns and 60 flares

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This large barrel pistol fires flares several hundred yards in the air illuminating a 100-yard-diameter area around it with dim, shadowy light for D10 + 5(10) Turns. Anyone who does not take precautions (shielding her eyes) must make a Simple Willpower Test or reflexively look at the flare, temporarily blinding her for the duration of the flare plus D6(3) Turns. Being shot with a flare causes D6 x 3(9) points of damage. If 10 or more points are inflicted, the flare lodges in the clothing and D10(5) points of burning damage are suffered per Turn. *EV:* 2; Cost $100, $90 for 36 additional cartridges.

Flashlight
1 RP for 24 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

This large, waterproof, industrial-strength flashlight has a range of roughly 50 yards. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $150.

Handcuffs
1 RP for 12 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

These metal handcuffs require a key or Escape Task to get free. A Difficult Strength Test with a –5 modifier may be used, but D8 + 4(8) points of damage are suffered. *EV:* 1; *Cost:* $50.

Helmet
1 RP per 10 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Law Enforcement, or Military)

A combat helmet protects the head when struck, either by chance (determined by the Chronicler) or when specifically targeted (see p. 172). *AV:* (D8 x 3) + 18(30); *EV:* 8; *Cost:* $100.

Oxygen Rebreather
1 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

This device allows a diver to breathe underwater much as SCUBA gear does. Rebreathers allow divers to remain underwater for up to four hours at a time, are smaller and lighter than conventional SCUBA gear, and do not produce the telltale bubbles that can reveal a diver's position. *EV:* 15; *Cost:* $2,000.

SCUBA Gear
1 RP for 4 sets

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

The Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus includes mask, flippers, weight belt, snorkel, and oxygen tanks. The tanks last for two hours underwater. *EV:* 20; *Cost:* $500.

Straightjacket
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Science & Research)

These long-term restraints bind a subject's upper body. A Dexterity and Escape Task may be attempted, although it suffers a –3 penalty. The jacket's straps can be broken using a Difficult Strength Test with a –5 penalty. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* $100.

Survival Kit
1 RP for 10 kits

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Survival kits are common equipment for teams operating in or near wilderness environments. The kit contains many items useful for obtaining essential food, shelter, and clothing: a knife, flint and steel, compass, first aid kit, flare gun and six flares, six fishhooks, and five yards of fishing line. Those without survival kits are penalized during Survival Tasks. *EV:* 10; *Cost:* $250.

Uniform
1 RP per 24 uniforms

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Any uniform can be acquired for undercover or covert operations. This includes police, military, fast food joints, repair or maintenance companies, state road crews, circus clowns, anything. Uniforms do not include the necessary paperwork or ID to gain access to restricted areas. *EV:* 2; *Cost:* varies.

Vest, Kevlar
1 RP per 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

These concealable (Perception + Notice Task to detect) bulletproof vests are used by law-enforcement agencies and bodyguards worldwide. Regardless of Strength, it causes medium encumbrance. *AV:* (D6 x 2) + 14(20), *EV:* 16; *Cost:* $800.

Vest, Light
1 RP per 10 vests

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

These protective garments are useful against close combat weapons but not firearms. The vest causes light encumbrance and is easily concealed. *AV:* (D8 x 2) + 4(12); *EV:* 5; *Cost:* $650.

Wetsuit
1 RP for 12 suits

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Wetsuits insulate against cold (temperature effects are one level less) and offer light protection. The matte black suits grant +2 to Stealth Tasks in dim light. AV: D6 + 1(4); *EV:* 4; *Cost:* $500.

VEHICLES

All vehicles employed by Aegis cells are registered to legitimate front organizations or government agencies, with no connection to any Aegis entity. A few hours' work, some phone calls, and an Intelligence and Bureaucracy Task, modified by the agent's Influence Quality, transfer any vehicle's registration and ownership to another front organization, avoiding unwanted suspicion. Most vehicles acquired by Aegis tend to be painted black, often with darkened windscreens when applicable.

Most vehicles come with an auto safety kit. This kit contains a fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and 10 road (signal) flares.

Ambulance
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

An ambulance is excellent for covert operations teams, particularly in urban areas. The sirens and lights clear the way, and the equipment carried in the vehicle may save the life of anyone during an operation. An ambulance is equipped with a vehicle comm link and medical supplies that provide the same benefit as a medic's kit (supplies are effectively unlimited).

Weight: 4,500; *Speed:* 110/55; *Acceleration:* 25; *Range:* 300; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 60; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $80,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4.

Biohazard Ambulance
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Science & Research)

The biohazard ambulance is an unmarked van containing much the same supplies as a mundane ambulance, plus additional gear to contain biohazards and treat individuals exposed to infectious agents. In addition to the standard medic's kit and vehicle comm link carried by a regular ambulance, the biohazard ambulance contains the following equipment: three biohazard suits, two ranged stunners, three flashlights, specimen jar and tools, and body bags.

The biohazard ambulance also contains two rather specialized items. The first is a portable biocontainment pod, commonly called a bubble stretcher. The biocontainment pod is similar to a normal stretcher except that it is enclosed by an airtight plastic bubble to contain contaminated individuals better. A small air tank supplies the patient with air until she can be removed to a quarantine facility. The second item is a small pressurized tank, similar to a fire extinguisher, filled with disinfectant chemical. The chemical spray is used to quickly disinfect individuals (usually wearing biohazard suits) leaving a contaminated area.

Weight: 4,500; *Speed:* 110/55; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 350; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 60; *AV:* 5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $90,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4.

Compact Car
2 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Criminal)

Weight: 1,500; *Speed:* 100/50; *Acceleration:* 25; *Range:* 500; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 40; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $15,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3; Auto safety kit.

Coupe
2 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Intelligence)

Weight: 2,000; *Speed:* 150/70; *Acceleration:* 35; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 45; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $20,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3; Auto safety kit.

Fishing Trawler
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Science & Research)

Fishing trawlers are built for extended, if not luxurious, excursions at sea. Trawlers are often used as covert operations centers for ocean-based missions and for clandestine signal interception. The cargo hold of a trawler has ample room for facilities (four spaces worth), and the cost of the ship includes hiring its crew. Standard equipment includes a radar array, GPS terminal, base radio, and Zodiac raft.

Weight: 15,000; *Speed:* 35/17; *Acceleration:* 5; *Range:* 800; *Toughness:* 5; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 120; *AV:* 4–8; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $250,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/7.

Helicopter, Attack
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

Assault helicopters are heavily armed and armored high-tech military craft. Armament includes a minigun and 1,000 rounds of tracer ammo, four heat-seeking missiles, and two rocket pods with eight rockets each. The helicopter is also equipped with 12 electronic countermeasure (ECM) pods that it can drop to thwart guided missiles. A vehicle comm link and radar array are standard equipment, and the helicopter cockpit can be fitted with ejection seats. The cockpit is heavily armored (AV 150) to protect the crew and incorporates a parachute, survival kit, first aid kit, and 10 signal flares.

Weight: 10,000; *Speed:* 300/150; *Acceleration:* 60; *Range:* 500; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 6; *DC:* 150; *AV:* 80; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 2/0.

Helicopter, Observation
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 4,500; *Speed:* 160/80; *Acceleration:* 40; *Range:* 200; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 40; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $700,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1; Vehicle comm link, radar array, parachutes, survival kit, first aid kit, 10 signal flares.

Helicopter, Passenger
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 3,500; *Speed:* 120/60; *Acceleration:* 30; *Range:* 250; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 50; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $720,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/5; Vehicle comm link, radar array, parachutes, survival kit, first aid kit, 10 signal flares.

Helicopter, Transport
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

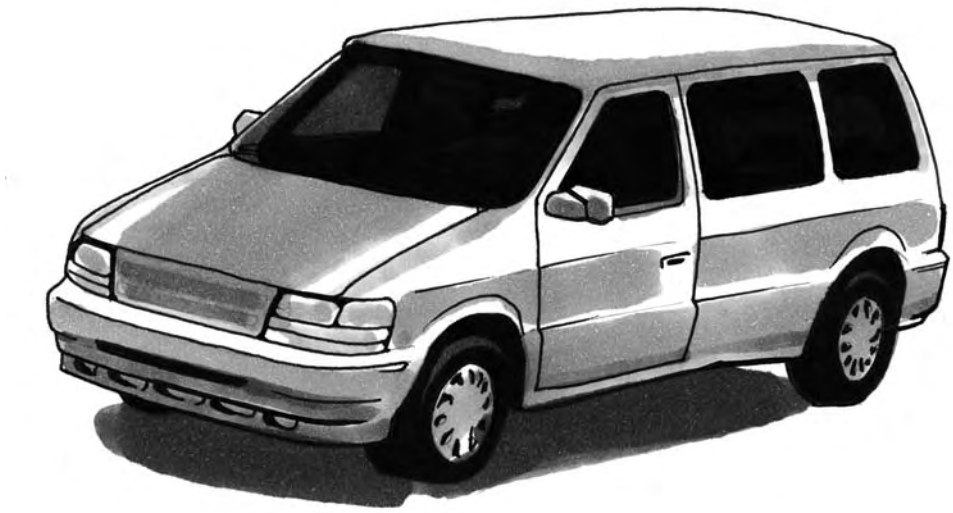
Weight: 5,000; *Speed:* 80/40; *Acceleration:* 30; *Range:* 200; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 60; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $950,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 2/0; *Cargo:* 6,000 lbs.; Vehicle comm link, radar array, parachutes, survival kit, first aid kit, 10 signal flares.

Hummer/SUV
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

These vehicles suffer no off-road penalties. The military version is HMMWV (use stats in parentheses)and may be armed with a light machine gun.

Weight: 6,000; *Speed:* 80/50; *Acceleration:* 15; *Range:* 320; *Toughness:* 5; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 65(110); *AV:* 2-5(8); *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $90,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3; *Cargo:* 3,000 lbs.; Auto safety kit.



Jet, Cargo
6 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

This enormous plane has copious space for cargo. Indeed, eight spaces worth of facilities can be placed within it.

Weight: 355,000; *Speed:* 400/200; *Acceleration:* 10; *Range:* 6,000; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 2000; *AV:* 4; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 3/0; *Cargo:* 100,000 lbs.; Vehicle comm link, radar array, parachutes, survival kit, first aid kit, 10 signal flares.

Jet, Civilian
6 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Science & Research)

Weight: 35,000; *Speed:* 500/250; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 2,000; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 250; *AV:* 4; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $3,100,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/8; *Cargo:* 3,000 lbs.; Vehicle comm link, radar array, parachutes, survival kit, first aid kit, 10 signal flares.

Jet, Fighter
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

Fighter jets can be any one of a number of military interceptor craft. As with most fixed-wing aircraft, the hull is unarmored and the jet is equipped with a vehicle comm link, radar array, ejection seat, and parachute. The pilot's equipment includes a first aid kit, survival kit, and signal flares. The jet can be fitted with a wide range of weapon loads, most often six heat seeking missiles and a 20 mm gatling cannon. Fighter jets are armed with 12 ECM pods as assault helicopters are.

Weight: 30,000; *Speed:* 1,000/500; *Acceleration:* 100; *Range:* 700; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 7; *DC:* 350; *AV:* 20; *Accuracy:* 4–7; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1; *Armament:* range 100/200/800/1500/2000; D10 x 10(50); 20-round bursts; target AV halved.

Jet, Jump
10 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Military)

Jump jets are primarily anti-ground vehicle weapons. In most ways, jump jets are nearly identical to normal fighter jets, with the exception of the VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) capability. VTOL aircraft, as implied by their name, do not require a runway for either lift-off or landing. Instead, jump jets lift off a landing pad vertically, as a helicopter. This makes jump jets useful for deployment in areas where building a runway is impossible or prohibitively expensive. The jump jet's role as ground-support vehicle warrants slightly different armament in most cases. In addition to a 20 mm Gatling cannon and two heat-seeking missiles, jump jets usually carry two rocket pods of eight rockets each, although additional or alternative weapon systems may be acquired separately. As in jet fighters, jump jets are equipped with ejection seats and parachutes for the pilot and navigator, as well as survival kits, first aid kits, and flares at each station.

Weight: 35,000; *Speed:* 500/250; *Acceleration:* 75; *Range:* 600; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 8; *DC:* 400; *AV:* 20; *Accuracy:* 4–7; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1; *Armament:* range 100/200/800/1500/2000; D10 x 10(50); 20-round bursts; target AV halved.

Jet Ski
1 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Law Enforcement)

Weight: 400; *Speed:* 30/15; *Acceleration:* 10; *Range:* 50; *Toughness:* 1; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 30; *AV:* 2; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $8,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1; 2 life jackets.

Lab RV
12 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Law Enforcement or Science & Research)

The lab RV is an extensive mobile laboratory that provides a quality research platform for fieldwork in isolated and remote areas. The RV contains research lab facilities large enough for four researchers to work simultaneously. The lab is equipped to handle biological, chemical, and medical research projects, and while the quality of the facility is not sufficient to provide a bonus, the RV is equipped with a workstation running Chemistry, Biochemistry, and Physician expert system programs. Additional equipment carried by the lab RV includes two quarantine tents, eight biohazard suits, four radiation suits, six personal radios, eight sets of specimen jars and tools, two Geiger counters, 24 radbadges, four dart rifles, 80 darts, 10 vials of tranquilizer, doctor's bag, four medic's kits, 10 industrial-strength flashlights, spotlight, video camera, remote monitor, vehicle comm link, and satellite uplink.

Weight: 7,000; *Speed:* 80/40; *Acceleration:* 15; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 85; *AV:* 2; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $250,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4.

Lab Van
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Science & Research)

The lab van is a large vehicle that has been equipped with a variety of high-tech scientific equipment. Lab vans are employed by police departments for crime scene investigations and by research organizations for quality fieldwork. The van

constitutes a small, two-investigator laboratory fully equipped for biological, chemical, and medical research (no bonus). The following equipment is also included in the lab van's supplies: quarantine tent, four biohazard suits, four sets of specimen jars and collection tools, Geiger counter, eight radbadges, dart rifle, 12 darts, six vials of tranquilizer, and several sealed cages for small live specimens. A vehicle comm link is standard as well.

Weight: 4,500; *Speed:* 90/40; *Acceleration:* 15; *Range:* 300; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 70; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $190,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4.

Minisub
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

The minisub is a small two-person submersible used for exploring sites deep underwater. The sub is equipped with a vehicle comm link, two robotic arms for specimen collection (Strength 8), a spotlight, air tanks good for two people for eight hours, two drysuits, and two sets of SCUBA gear.

Weight: 5,000; *Speed:* 30/15; *Acceleration:* 5; *Range:* 90; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 100; *AV:* 4–7; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $250,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1.

Minivan
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Intelligence)

Weight: 4,500; *Speed:* 120/60; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 450; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 60; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $30,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/7; *Cargo:* 1,000 lbs.; Auto safety kit.

Motorcycle
1 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 500; *Speed:* 160/70; *Acceleration:* 45; *Range:* 225; *Toughness:* 1; *Handling:* 5; *DC:* 30; *AV:* 2; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $10,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1.

Pickup Truck
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 3,500; *Speed:* 110/65; *Acceleration:* 25; *Range:* 450; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 50; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $20,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/2; *Cargo:* 2,000 lbs.; Auto safety kit.

Police Cruiser
4 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence or Law Enforcement)

Masquerading as police officers can provide one of the best covers available to a covert ops team, but operatives should take care to follow proper police procedure as much as possible to avoid unnecessary suspicion. Standard equipment includes a shotgun, 50 shot shells, vehicle comm link, first aid kit, 50 signal flares, and a radar gun.

Weight: 2,500; *Speed:* 140/70; *Acceleration:* 35; *Range:* 550; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 75; *AV:* 5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $35,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3.

Prop Plane
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 5,900; *Speed:* 260/230; *Acceleration:* 8; *Range:* 1,200; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 65; *AV:* 2; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $290,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3; Vehicle comm link, radar array, parachutes, survival kit, first aid kit, 10 signal flares.

Recreational Vehicle
4 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence Any SoI

Weight: 7,000; *Speed:* 80/40; *Acceleration:* 15; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 75; *AV:* 2; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $100,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/8; Auto safety kit.

Security Sedan
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Intelligence)

These customized luxury sedans are built for protection. The body and windows are heavily armored and the tires are made of solid rubber. A vehicle comm link and scrambler, autonav computer, radar detector are installed as standard features. To protect against gas attacks, the car can also be made airtight at the flip of a switch. This activates an independent air supply that can provide five passengers with three hours of breathable air. To compensate for the car's extra weight, a more powerful engine is installed, giving the car a slightly better top speed and overdrive capabilities (numbers in parentheses). The overdrive may be operated safely for five minutes. After that, roll D10 every five minutes. If the result is less than the number of five-minute periods that the overdrive has been used in the last 30 minutes, the car loses 15 mph and the driver must pass a Dexterity and Driving Task. Another damage check is made every Turn after that until the engine is shut off and repaired.

Weight: 3,000; *Speed:* 110(140)/55; *Acceleration:* 25(35); *Range:* 350; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 70; *AV:* 40; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $45,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4.

Sedan
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 2,500; *Speed:* 130/65; *Acceleration:* 30; *Range:* 550; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 45; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $25,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4; Auto safety kit.

Snow Cat
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Military or Science & Research)

The Snow Cat is a large multipassenger tracked vehicle built for traveling on ice and snow in adverse conditions. Unlike a snowmobile, the cabin is enclosed and heated. The Snow Cat contains a vehicle comm link, survival kit, first aid kit, and 25 signal flares.

Weight: 5,000; *Speed:* 25/15; *Acceleration:* 8; *Range:* 600; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 1; *DC:* 60; *AV:* 5–7; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $70,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3.

Snowmobile/ATV
1 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, or Law Enforcement)

Weight: 600; *Speed:* 100/60; *Acceleration:* 9; *Range:* 150; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 5; *DC:* 30; *AV:* 2; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $4,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1.

Speed Boat
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Weight: 3,750; *Speed:* 80/40; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 200; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 70; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $250,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/4; First aid kit, flare gun/6 flares, life jackets.

Sports Car
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

Weight: 2,250; *Speed:* 160/80; *Acceleration:* 35; *Range:* 300; *Toughness:* 2; *Handling:* 5; *DC:* 45; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $40,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/2; Auto safety kit.

Surveillance Van
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, or Law Enforcement)

This van is specially equipped for surveillance work. Equipment includes vehicle comm link connected with satellite uplink and scrambler, four headset microphones, electrical and electronic tool kits, 6 wire taps, 12 audio bugs, 6 AV bugs, digital storage, three remote monitors attached to one workstation, laser eavesdropper, shotgun microphone, and starlight telescope.

Weight: 5,500; *Speed:* 110/60; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 65; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $35,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/7.

SWAT Van
7 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Law Enforcement, or Military)

These vans are used by SWAT teams nationwide to carry six-member assault teams to and from operation sites. The back of the van is taken up by equipment lockers and four SWAT team members; the other two members sit up front. The body of the van is well armored and is equipped with the following gear: six submachine guns with flashlight mounts, 50 clips ammo, six helmets, six body armor, six gas masks, six headset microphones, 20 each stun and smoke grenades, vehicle comm link and scrambler, sledgehammer, and medical kit.

Weight: 5,000; *Speed:* 110/55; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 100; *AV:* 50; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $35,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/6.

Telephone Crane Truck
5 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian or Intelligence)

A telephone repair crew is a great cover for a covert operation, particularly for planting wiretaps. The crane can be useful in many other situations as well (surveillance, for example). The truck carries a full electronics tool kit, a stack of orange road cones, and a vehicle comm link.

Weight: 5,500; *Speed:* 90/45; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 65; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $25,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/2.

Truck Tractor
2 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Criminal, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

Weight: 20,000 (w/trailer); *Speed:* 100/50; *Acceleration:* 15; *Range:* 350; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 150; *AV:* 4–6; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $30,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/2; Auto safety kit, vehicle comm link. Trailer(s) must be purchased separately for 2 RPs.

Van
3 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Weight: 5,500; *Speed:* 100/55; *Acceleration:* 20; *Range:* 400; *Toughness:* 3; *Handling:* 2; *DC:* 65; *AV:* 2–5; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $35,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/14; *Cargo:* 1,200 lbs.; Auto safety kit.

Zodiac
1 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

The Zodiac is a four-man inflatable raft employing a small but powerful electric motor. The small size and sturdiness of the raft and the silence of the engine make it a popular vehicle for covert operations teams.

Weight: 100; *Speed:* 40/20; *Acceleration:* 10; *Range:* 20; *Toughness:* 1; *Handling:* 5; *DC:* 15; *AV:* 1; *Accuracy:* n/a; *Cost:* $3,000; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/3

VEHICLE ACCESSORIES

Autonav Computer
1 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

An autonav computer uses a GPS link to determine the exact location of the vehicle it is installed in and display the vehicle's position on a small computer display monitor. The autonav contains topographic maps of the entire country and street maps of most major cities. *Cost:* $500.

Inflatable Raft
1 RP for 4 rafts

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

This raft is a standard four-person inflatable raft with oars, similar to those used in freshwater rafting expeditions. When deflated, the whole raft, oars and all, can easily be stored in a car trunk. *Cost:* $700.

Infrared Spotlight
1 RP for 6 lights

Prerequisite: Influence (Intelligence, Military, or Science & Research)

Infrared spotlights are large, vehicle-mounted spotlights for use with infrared vision equipment. The spotlight is identical to a standard spotlight except that it projects light in the invisible infrared range, meaning that users will still need some means of seeing in the infrared spectrum for it to be effective. IR spotlights are most often used in conjunction with IR cameras and goggles. *Cost:* $100.

Parachute
1 RP for 6 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

Parachutes are used as safety equipment on most aircraft, as well as for recreational purposes. The parachutes favored by Aegis operatives are black, nonreflective, steerable 'chutes designed for military special forces and airborne troops. *EV:* 5; *Cost:* $400.

Road/Signal Flares
1 RP for 400 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Any)

These are small colored warning flares used to mark an area, such as at road hazards and aircraft landing zones. The flares are also sometimes carried by divers, since they include their own oxidant and can burn underwater. *Cost:* $20 for 6.

Spotlight
1 RP for 4 units

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

A powerful spotlight that can be mounted on any ground vehicle or helicopter or set up on a tripod. The spotlight can be used to illuminate large patches of ground from an aircraft or to light an area clearly for extended work at night. *Cost:* $100.

Tool Kit
2 RP for 1 kit

Prerequisite: Influence (All)

All tool kits are contained in large but portable metal cases. Each is specific to a certain Craft, Electronics, or Mechanics skill and allows use without penalty. *EV:* 20; *Cost:* $1,000.

Winch
1 RP for 2 winches

Prerequisite: Influence (Civilian, Intelligence, Law Enforcement, Military, or Science & Research)

A strong winch and 100 yards of cable capable of lifting or pulling very large items (up to the weight of the vehicle equipped with the winch). The winch can be mounted on the front, rear, or sides of the vehicle. *Cost:* $130.

RESTRICTED RESOURCES

Restricted resources are unique, extremely rare, or secret items that are available only to characters with connections in particular organizations.

Alien Technology
Varies

Prerequisite: MOONDUST or Groom Lake Profession

Since Project MOONDUST's main role is that of crash recovery and technology analysis, alien technology is often available to certain personnel for testing and research. The type of equipment available is determined by the Chronicler. Alien technology is strictly "need to know" and is discussed in more detail in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 223).

Aurora
20 RP for 1 Aurora III

Prerequisite: Groom Lake Pilot Profession

Since the late Seventies, Aegis has been hard at work analyzing portions of recovered alien spacecraft at the Groom Dry Lake Research Facility (Area 51) in Nevada. The major result of that program is the Aurora Project, dedicated to creating the most advanced fighter aircraft in existence. All planes in the program have depended to some degree on technology that mankind would not have developed on its own for several centuries. The Aurora III's predecessors are less capable and thus may be had for 15 RP or less. The details of the Aurora Project are strictly "need to know" and are discussed in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 226).

Magic Van
10 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: NSA Profession

One of the NSA's strongest ELINT tools (electronics intelligence) is a secret fleet of vans packed with specialized computer surveillance equipment. The rumored existence of these ELINT vans and their capabilities have raised them to near-mythic status in electronic security circles and have earned them the unofficial nickname "magic van," half out of professional respect, half out of fear.

The van is capable of making a TEMPEST attack on any unshielded computer in use within 100 yards, regardless of intervening obstacles. TEMPEST stands for Transient Electro-Magnetic Pulse Emission Standard, which is the U.S. government's standard describing how much EM radiation a computer can emit without compromising the security of that computer's data. A computer that meets the minimum criteria set by the standard to qualify as a secure device is designated as TEMPEST-secure. TEMPEST attacks are performed by using sensitive radio receivers to read the radiation emitted by computer monitors and cables. The data is then fed to a specialized computer which interprets and reproduces the data. About 20% of commercial computer systems are TEMPEST-secure, though 80% of defense contractors maintain TEMPEST-secure systems. All military computers that handle classified data are TEMPEST-secure, as are all NSA and CIA computer systems. Aegis laptops and HERMES links are 100% TEMPEST-secure.

A successful TEMPEST attack allows the operator to reproduce the activity of any peripheral in use by the target computer. Once the attack succeeds and the computer is "locked," the agent can see anything that appears on the target computer screen, read what is being typed on its keyboard, and capture data sent to a printer. There is absolutely no way for the targeted computer or its operator to detect such an attack, unless the van itself is noticed and the operator realizes its significance.

To conduct a TEMPEST attack, the operator must make an Intelligence and System Operations (TEMPEST) Task. For the attack to succeed, the operator must be within 100 yards of the targeted computer, which must be on. Tuning into a particular computer takes D6(3) minutes. If the operator knows what data are likely to appear on a specific computer screen, she can scan through all available computers until she finds the expected data. When a TEMPEST attack is initiated, the Chronicler should determine the number of computers in the attack radius. To determine the time it will take the attacker to locate and lock on to the target system, divide the number of computers in the area in half (round up) and use that as the multiplier to the usual time taken. The sum rolled is the number of minutes before the operator successfully locates the target computer. For example, if an agent is parked outside a building with a network of 30 operating computers, it will take her D6 x 15 (45) minutes to find a particular computer.

Vehicle stats as Surveillance Van (see p. 148); Cost $50,000.

MHIC-EDOM
5 RP for 1 unit

Prerequisite: CAPS, CYGNET, MKULTRA, or RASPUTIN Profession

The Microwave Hypnotic Intracerebral Control–Electronic Dissolution of Memory (MHIC-EDOM) was the only entirely technological mind-control technique developed by the MKULTRA project. The MHIC-EDOM is a small portable device, roughly the size and shape of a large cigar, that enables a skilled user

to affect and control a subject's state of mind. The operator must have the Electronics and Hypnosis skills to have any chance of being successful. The details of the MHIC-EDOM are strictly "need to know" and are discussed in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 227)

Mind Control Drugs
1 RP for 6 doses

Prerequisite: MKULTRA or RASPUTIN Profession

MKULTRA developed a number of psychoactive drugs that can alter a subject's state of mind reliably and leave virtually no trace of their passage (a Perception and Medicine Task with at least two Success Levels are required). The details of mind-control drugs are strictly "need to know" and are discussed in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 227).

Psi Drugs
1 RP for 6 doses

Prerequisite: CAPS, CYGNET, MKULTRA, or RASPUTIN Profession

Psi drugs temporarily enhance a psychic's abilities. Controlled use of psi drugs can increase a psychic's effectiveness and extend her abilities longer than would otherwise be possible. Careless use of psi drugs can lead to addiction, insanity, or death. The details of psi drugs are strictly "need to know" and are discussed in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 227).

Psychotrons
Varies

Prerequisite: CAPS, CYGNET, MKULTRA, or RASPUTIN Profession

Psychotrons are devices powered or influenced by psychic energy. The user need not be psychic, but must not be a Void or Psink. There are three classifications, or orders, of psychotron: Third Order, the weakest, costs five RP, Second Order costs 10 RP, and First Order costs 15 RP. The details of psychotrons are strictly "need to know" and are discussed in **Chapter Six: Classified** (see p. 228).

Special Weapons
5 RP for 1 item

Prerequisite: CIA, DIA, CYGNET, or MKULTRA Profession

The experts at Central Intelligence went through a heyday in the early 1950s and 1960s, developing eclectic weapon after eclectic weapon. The flurry of activity died down when assassination was expressly rejected as a policy by the U.S. government (at least overtly), but such weapons are still being developed and produced. While the briefcase MP is widely available, other covert assassination tools exist. These weapons appear to be mundane objects but have various small arms inside them. The weapon has only one quarter of the normal ammunition capacity and suffers a –1 penalty to combat Tasks. Chroniclers and players may devise the details of these weapons.

SR-71 Blackbird
15 RP for 1 vehicle

Prerequisite: Air Force Pilot or Groom Lake Test Pilot Profession

The military decommissioned its fleet of SR-71 spy planes and gave them to NASA to use as test vehicles. Three SR-71s remained in official use as part of NASA's high-altitude, high-speed research program until it ended in 2001. At present, its former missions are now largely performed by satellites or unmanned drones. Over time, Aegis transferred many of the planes to its own airfields.

Despite more than thirty years of aerospace research since its development, the SR-71 Blackbird remains one of the fastest and highest-flying production aircraft in existence. The aircraft's speed and its ability to carry conventional heat-seeking missiles (a holdover from its original design as an interceptor) make the Blackbird the only unclassified aircraft in the world that is capable of overtaking and engaging most extraterrestrial craft encountered to date.

Because of the high altitude and speeds maintained by the Blackbird, its crew must wear pressurized spacesuits rather than the standard pilot flight suits. The crew stations are equipped with ejection seats, parachutes, and first aid and survival kits.

In its role as interceptor, the SR-71 may be fitted with up to six conventional heat-seeking missiles, although any munitions must be acquired separately. For security purposes, any cell that intends to incorporate an SR-71 must keep the plane in a hangar at all times when it is not flying missions.

Weight: 60,000; *Speed:* 2,500/1,250; *Acceleration:* 200; *Range:* 3,200; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 3; *DC:* 650; *AV:* 20; *Accuracy:* 6; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1.

Tome
5 RP for 1 tome

Prerequisite: CAPS Profession

This represents a collection of scrolls, a book, or even a computer database. Most often a tome focuses on one ritual from one mystical tradition and details its history, how to cast it, and known variations. The tome counts as an instructor for that particular ritual, but the student must be from the proper tradition. Other tomes concern traditions in general, and act as similar instructors for the Rituals skill. No skill can be improved beyond level five through the use of a tome, and many tomes are less capable (the Chronicler should set the highest skill level that may be attained through a certain tome).

Chap

ter Four Tradecraft

As with all games, the *Unisystem* has rules. They help the Chronicler determine what happens at certain points of the story. The *Unisystem* offers several different play options.

The main rule is do what works best for the players. If a rule does not satisfy, is too complicated, requires too much detail, or is just plain unpopular, change it. Be sure that the entire gaming group knows about any changes beforehand, however. This minimizes complaints and arguments that detract from everyone's enjoyment of the game.

USING THE RULES

In most *Conspiracy X* games, many character actions do not require rules, rolling dice, consulting charts, or determining Success Levels. Common examples of such "ruleless" actions are discussed below.

Talking: Unless the character is gagged, mute, or trying to speak in a foreign language he does not know very well, speech is always possible. A player need only recite the character's "lines."

Routine Actions: These include anything that any person can do, such as picking up objects, walking from one place to another, opening and closing unlocked doors. Any action that a normal person can perform with little or no effort requires only that the player announce that his character is going to do it.

Traveling: Getting there is not always half the fun. As in movies and books, the Chronicler can "cut" any long, tedious actions. For example, if the characters are traveling to a crash site by plane, and the real action awaits them there, the Chronicler can sum up their trip in a few sentences:

You pulled the necessary strings and sat in the back of a military cargo plane for a couple of hours. It was cold and uncomfortable, but no questions were asked. You've just landed at the military base and are escorted to the gates in the back of a covered truck where the requisitioned sedan is waiting for you.

In general, if the rules are not required, don't use them. The feeling that the players are telling a story should be disrupted as little as possible.

Only when the outcome of an action is in doubt, and the results of that action are important, should the rules come into play. The rules answer the question "What happened?" Generally, the outcome of an action depends on the Attributes or skills of the characters (all those numbers on the character sheet), the circumstances (which may impose bonuses and penalties), and good old fashioned luck (determined by the result of a dice roll).

DICELESS ROLEPLAYING

The base or "default" method of resolving actions in the **Unisystem** is through the use of dice. Not everyone likes dice—indeed, a few people actively hate them. Some dislike the idea of letting pure chance determine the outcome of a story; others would like a more elegant way to simulate randomness. To accommodate as many different playing styles as possible, the **Unisystem** has been designed to be usable in several different ways. In addition to the dice-based rules, the game can be played in two other ways: using regular playing cards (or Zener cards), and eliminating randomness altogether. These methods are discussed in detail in the Appendix (see p. 246).

USING THE RANDOM ELEMENT

The **Unisystem** emphasizes story over the mechanics of the game system. In order to keep this focus, Chroniclers should consider the following.

WHEN TO ROLL

Rolls should only be made when the outcome of an action has an impact on the story, especially if success is doubtful. Rolls can add to the excitement and tension of the game, because nobody, including the Chronicler, knows what the final outcome will be. When rolls are used often, and for mundane activities (such as parking a car), that excitement is muted.

ROLLS DON'T RULE

Chroniclers should "alter" roll results if those results are both highly unlikely and disruptive to the basic plot. Suppose a minor encounter – a single NDD agent surprising two Cast Members – turned bad fast. A fight ensued and the Chronicler rolled very, very well for the enemy agent's attack. All of a sudden, enough damage has been inflicted on a Cast Member to kill him. This could undermine or even ruin a storyline.

In this situation, the outcome rolls could be "adjusted" to represent minor wounds or just a scary near miss. It helps if the Chronicler makes his rolls out of sight of the players.

On the other hand, if it becomes common knowledge that the Chronicler ignores roll results to keep the story going, a great deal of the uncertainty and thrill of the roleplaying game is lost. The Chronicler should keep this practice to a minimum, so that when he needs to use it his players do not catch on.

THE BASIC RULE

All actions are resolved in one basic manner. Roll a ten-sided die (D10) and add the Attribute and/or skill numbers the Chronicler deems applicable. Tell the result to the Chronicler, who adds or subtracts any modifiers (for example, noticing something is more difficult in darkness than in broad daylight). If the final result is a nine or higher, the action succeeds. If the result is less than nine, the attempt fails. The higher the total value, the more successful the action is (in some cases, just being successful is enough; in others, the degree of success may have some significance). This basic rule applies when using skills, engaging in combat, working magic, and so forth.

TASKS

Most actions, from sneaking around in the dark to writing the Great American Novel, are called Tasks. A Task uses one Attribute and one skill; the proper ones are decided by the Chronicler. The die is rolled, and the applicable Attribute, skill, and modifiers are added to the result. The higher the traits used are, the greater the chance of success.

Milo is playing an agent named Jack who has broken into a NDD research lab. From his high vantage point in the suspended ceiling, he has spotted three figures talking. The Chronicler asks Milo to use Jack's Perception (to see how good a look he gets) and Notice skill (the agent's practice at picking up things that slip by most people). Jack's Perception is four, his Notice is two. Milo rolls a D10, with a result of six. This result, added to his skill and Attribute levels, totals 12. Since it is dark, the Chronicler applies a –3 penalty to the Task, dropping the total to nine. This is still a success. The Chronicler says, "As he turns, the light catches one of the three figures – it's scaly and green . . . a Saurian! What do you do?"

TESTS

Some actions use only a character's Attributes; no skills are applicable. Examples include lifting (which uses Strength), remembering (which uses Intelligence), and so on. These situations are known as Attribute Tests, or just Tests.

There are two types of Test: Simple and Difficult. Simple Tests are relatively easy things – lifting an object using your entire body, for example. To resolve a Simple Attribute Test, roll and add the Attribute involved, doubled. For example, a character with a Strength of two adds four to the roll.

Difficult Tests are more challenging – lifting something while off balance or with only one hand. In those cases, only the value of the Attribute involved (do not double it) is added. This, of course, reduces the chances of success. Other than when called for specifically in these rules, Difficult Tests should be used sparingly and only when some internal factor keeps a character from bringing the full effects of his Attribute to bear. Examples include trying to keep your balance with an inner ear infection (Dexterity), trying to remember a formula while groggy from lack of sleep or drugs (Intelligence), or trying to fight your way through exhaustion when you are seriously depressed (Willpower). External circumstances should be handled with roll modifiers (see p. 157). The Chronicler judges when a circumstance is internal or external.

Charlie is wandering the snowfields of the arctic, trying to locate a meteor fragment that has impacted nearby. He does not know that something else is wandering in the blizzard and is closing in on him. The Chronicler asks Charlie for a Simple Perception Test. If Charlie had been wandering for a couple days and was suffering from partial snow-blindness, or was exhausted and was having difficulty focusing with his senses, the Chronicler might ask for a Difficult Test. If Charlie was otherwise fit, but was operating in a heavy blizzard, the Chronicler might keep the Test Simple but apply a –3 or –5 penalty to the roll instead.

WHAT ATTRIBUTES TO USE

The Chronicler often has to decide quickly what Attribute to use on a given Task or Test. For most situations, the relevant Attribute is described in the skill description, the story write-up, or somewhere else in the book. For tense, dramatic situations, however, the Chronicler should avoid slowing the game down by thumbing through materials and just let common sense guide the choice. Here are some rules of thumb.

Strength: Strength works when something requiring brute force is involved. Physical skills such as Sports, Climbing, and Swimming often require Strength.

Dexterity: One of the most commonly used Attributes, Dexterity applies to any Task or Test requiring accuracy, physical balance, quickness, and hand-eye coordination.

Constitution: Constitution is limited to physical Tasks involving long-term endurance and vitality, and in Tests against diseases and toxins.

Intelligence: Anything that primarily involves memory and reasoning uses Intelligence. Remembering a name, understanding a difficult concept or idea, solving a mathematics problem or a puzzle – all use Intelligence.

Perception: There is some overlap between Intelligence and Perception. When in doubt, the Chronicler can have the player use the higher of the two (or the lower for a particularly challenging Task or Test). Generally, Perception is used to spot, recognize, and identify things. The overlap with Intelligence comes from the fact that memory is used to recognize and identify things. In general, if the Task or Test primarily involves any of the five senses, use Perception.

Willpower: This Attribute is most commonly used defensively – to resist other skills, powers, and abilities. It is also used on Tasks or Tests when a character is trying to intimidate, convince, or influence another. Willpower helps a person maintain eye contact during a staring contest, for example.

UNSKILLED ATTEMPTS

Sometimes, a character must try to do something he is not trained to do. Unskilled attempts always have a hefty penalty, but very gifted or talented people may be able to succeed even on the first attempt. Use the appropriate Attribute (not doubled), with a minimum –2 penalty (in addition to any other

modifiers). Furthermore, the Success Levels (see p. 159) can never be too high. No matter how high the total outcome roll is, only a Decent outcome (two Success Levels) will result from the attempt.

Some skills require so much training and preparation that untrained people have no chance of performing them. A penalty of –6 to –10 can be applied if the character is trying to perform very complex skills. For example, trying to perform surgery with no help other than a few medical manuals should suffer in the area of a –10 penalty. Alternatively, the Chronicler may rule that the attempt automatically fails (or, to keep the players in suspense, he may let them make rolls – who knows, they might get lucky).

Richard is playing Marshall, a tech specialist being flown to a site of possible supernatural activity to make some tests. Midflight, the pilot of the small jet blacks out, leaving Marshall alone to take control of the aircraft. This Task would normally be resolved by using a Dexterity and Piloting Task, but Marshall has no Piloting skill! A penalty of –2 is assigned for the lack of skill. Marshall has a Dexterity 3, so he adds only one to the roll. If the total is nine or higher (which would require a roll of eight or more), he regains control of the plane and restores the autopilot. The Chronicler decides that a penalty of –6 applies if Marshall tries to do more and land the plane himself.

RESISTED TASKS/TESTS

Sometimes, a character tries to do something and another character (either a Cast Member or one of the Supporting Cast) tries to stop or hinder him. Similarly, an attempted action may be noticed or foiled by the target or victim of the action. This arises mostly in combat. When this happens, a Resisted Task or Test must be resolved.

Resisted Tasks or Tests use the same basic rule mentioned above. All participants in the contest roll and add the appropriate Attribute or skill. If all fail (no one rolls over nine), no one accomplishes the effect desired and all may look a bit foolish in the attempt. If one succeeds and the others fail, the successful character prevails. If more than one succeed, the results are compared, and the higher total result, after adding and subtracting all modifiers, is the winner of the contest.

Arm Wrestling: This requires both sides to make Strength Tests (most likely Simple); the higher successful result wins the contest. For dramatic purposes, the contest might be spread over more than one roll (two out of three, or three out of five, for example).

Pursuit on Foot: Both sides use Dexterity and Constitution. If one person started running first, he adds a +2 to the roll. Also, the side with the higher Speed adds the difference between the two Speeds. Subtract the lower Speed from the higher one, and add the result to the faster character's roll. The winner manages either to catch up with or lose the pursuer, depending on his intention. This too could be stretched out over a number of rolls, each one closing or increasing the gap.

Sneaking: The person doing the sneaking uses Dexterity and Stealth. The target uses either Perception and Notice or a Perception Test (most likely Simple).

Combat: Combat is described in more detail later in this chapter (see p. 162).

THE ROLE OF LUCK

Sometimes people perform feats they should normally not be able to accomplish. By the same token, even the most accomplished person occasionally fumbles or screws up relatively simple Tasks. When a roll (before adding or subtracting any modifiers) result is a 10 or a one, there is a chance that something really good or bad is about happen.

THE RULE OF 10

On a roll of 10, roll again, subtract five, and add the result (if higher than zero) to 10. If the second roll is five or less, nothing is added and the final roll remains 10. If another 10 is rolled, add five to the roll (for a total of 15), and roll again. If a player rolls a string of 10s, he keeps adding fives to the result and rolling again. The possible results are summarized in the Role of Luck Table.

Victor, played by Ross, is being chased across the rooftops by two NDD agents. He is quickly running out of options and has no choice but to make a desperate leap across an alleyway to a nearby building. He has a Strength 2 and a Dexterity 2. The Chronicler imposes a –5 penalty, as the buildings are quite far apart. Fearing the worse fate that awaits if the agents catch up to him, Ross steels himself and rolls the die. He gets a 10. "Roll again," says the Chronicler. Ross rolls again, getting a second 10! His total is 15 so far, but he gets to roll a third time. This time he gets a three, and the result does not change. The 15, plus Victor's Dexterity and Strength, gives him an 19, which is reduced to 14 by the –5 penalty – well over the needed nine. "You leap further than you could have imagined," the Chronicler explains. "For a few moments, you experience almost superhuman potential, then you land well past the building's edge. You feel shaky and weak-kneed, and you know that you may never be able to duplicate such a feat."

THE RULE OF 1

On a roll of one, roll again, subtract five, and if the result is negative, that negative replaces the first roll. If the result is positive, the roll remains one. If the second roll is one, the prior roll is replaced with –5, and the player must roll again (applying the same rule). The possible results are summarized in the Role of Luck Table.

Kat the police officer, played by Annalee, is wrestling with a violent cultist. Kat has Strength 4. The cultist is relatively strong, Strength 5. Kat tries to overpower the goon. Both sides use their Strength, doubled, in a Resisted Test. Annalee rolls a one! Her second roll is a three, resulting in a replacement roll of –2, which gives her a total of six (her base eight, minus two). The Chronicler rolls for the cultist. The die roll is a seven, which produces a total of 17. "Your grip slips. The cultist breaks free and tosses you across the room," the Chronicler describes. "Grinning smugly, he lunges at you. What do you do?"

ROLE OF LUCK TABLE

	Result after Second Roll	
Second Roll	**Rule of 10**	**Rule of 1**
1	10	–5, roll again
2	10	–3
3	10	–2
4	10	–1
5	10	1
6	11	1
7	12	1
8	13	1
9	14	1
10	15, roll again	1

ALTERNATIVE RULE

The Rules of One and 10 are designed to make extraordinary successes or failures relatively uncommon. They do add a bit of complexity to the game however. For those desiring something a bit simpler, the second roll should be D6–1. If the first roll was 10, add the result. If the first roll was one, subtract the result. If the second roll is a six, add or subtract five, and roll again.

This option requires the use of a different die and increases the chance of a higher or lower final result, but the change is not so significant that it is unbalancing.

MODIFIERS

Basic Tasks and Tests account for only the appropriate skills and Attributes. External circumstances can make some Tasks or Tests easier or more difficult. A ladder is a lot easier to climb than a greased pole. Shooting at a target in the dark is a lot harder

than at high noon. If the Chronicler feels that a Task or Test is made easier or more difficult because of external circumstances, he can add modifiers, positive or negative, to any result.

Modifiers vary as widely as potential circumstances but should rarely amount to more than +5 or less than –10. The Base Modifier Table gives a descriptive label to certain ranges of modifiers. These are suggestions only – Chroniclers should not ask characters for Moderate or Very Difficult Task as the player will not know exactly what modifier to apply.

BASE MODIFIERS TABLE

Routine: No roll needed
Easy: +5 or more to the roll
Moderate: +3 to +4 to the roll
Average: +1 to +2 to the roll
Challenging (includes most combat rolls): No modifier
Difficult: –1 to –2 to the roll
Very Difficult: –3 to –5 to the roll
Heroic: –6 to –9 to the roll
Near-impossible: –10 or worse

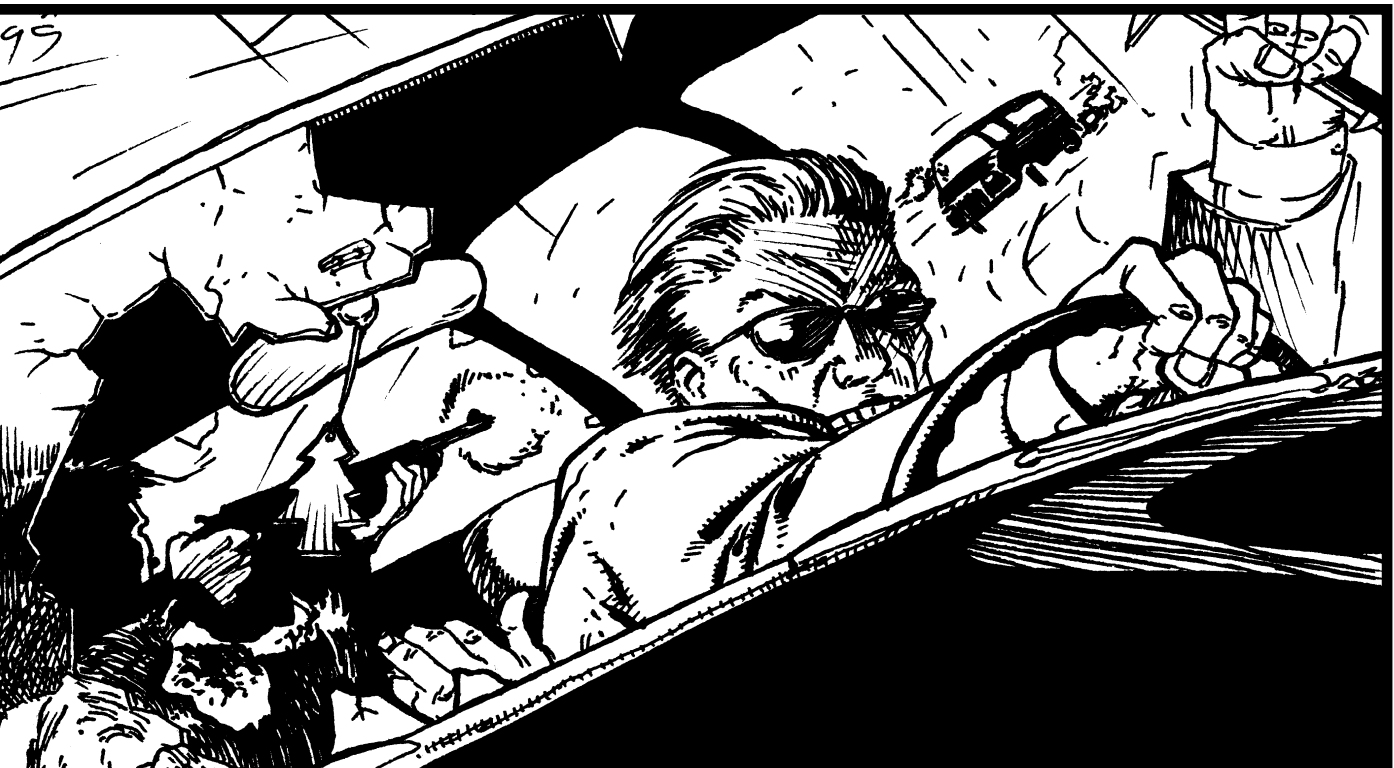
Note that a modifier is the only means to make a Test or Task easier (otherwise the target number remains at least nine). Unlike Success Levels which measure a certain degree of success (see p. 159), modifiers are used when external circumstances adjust the chances of success of any kind. Modifiers are also used, rather than Difficult Tests, when the hindrance on success comes from external, and not internal, circumstances (see p. 155).

Assigning modifiers should only be done when absolutely necessary, as it may slow down the game. The Chronicler determines what circumstances are important enough to create modifiers and how much they affect an outcome.

THE OUTCOME TABLE

Sometimes, being successful at a Test or Task is not enough. The degree of success may have an immediate impact on the game or on future actions. This is particularly true in social interaction rolls, where a high level of success may improve future relations with the same people. It also applies to artistic endeavors, where the Success Level determines how good of a work is produced (no matter what the roll in artistic endeavors, something is created at the end of the Task). Furthermore, in combat, a particularly good or lucky blow or shot may end a fight right then and there.

Agent Riggs is doing some research via his HERMES link on a strange humanoid he encountered while performing some reconnaissance at a suspected Black Book site. Riggs can access lots of different data on strange humanoids with a successful Intelligence and Research Task. Still, the Chronicler decides Riggs needs a particularly good session (three Success Levels) to uncover anything about the specific strange humanoid he witnessed. On the other hand,



if HERMES didn't have anything specific about the humanoid Riggs encountered or if any information provided required some fancy database management and leaps of research intuition, the Chronicler could impose a negative penalty to the Task (thus making a minimum success more difficult). So too could a negative penalty be imposed if Riggs' HERMES link was experiencing technical difficulties (one too many drops or bangs) or was in restricted service (for normal security reasons), or if Riggs was on some kind of internal security watch (and thus his access was limited by Aegis itself).

When the degree of success of a Task is important, the Chronicler consults the Outcome Table. This guideline reveals how how impressive the character's actions were. An imaginative Chronicler can use the results to add to the drama of the story. For example, a highly successful display of combat skill may cause enemies to surrender or flee, too intimidated to continue fighting. A particularly successful artistic or speaking performance may gain a character new friends and admirers. The Outcome Table is meant as a playing aid, not a restrictive law. The table can be used as often or seldom as the Chronicler desires.

OUTCOME TABLE

9–10 Adequate: The Task or Test was accomplished. If an artistic endeavor, it is just adequate, and critics/audiences are likely to give it "ho-hum" responses. A complex and involved Task takes the maximum required time to complete. An attempted maneuver was barely accomplished and might appear to be the result of luck rather than skill. Social skills produce minimal benefits for the character.

Combat: Attack does normal damage.

11–12 Decent: The Task or Test was accomplished with relative ease and even some flair. Artistic results are above average, resulting in a warm reaction from many, but not most. Complex and involved Tasks take 10 percent less than the maximum required time. Attempted maneuvers are skillfully accomplished. Social skills manage to gain some benefits for the character (including a +1 to further attempts on the same people under similar circumstances).

Combat: Attack does normal damage.

13–14 Good: The Task or Test was completed with ease. Artistic results are largely appreciated by connoisseurs and well liked by the public (although some critics will be able to find something wrong). Complex and involved Tasks take 25 percent (one-quarter) less time than normally required. Attempted maneuvers are done with seeming effortlessness, apparently the result of great skill. Social skills are not only successful, the character enjoys +2 on future attempts on the same people (this is not cumulative with subsequent high rolls – use the highest bonus only).

Combat: Attack does normal damage.

15–16 Very Good: The Task or Test was very successful. Artistic endeavors are rewarded with a great deal of appreciation from the intended audience. Complex and involved Tasks can be finished in half the time. Social skills produce a lasting impression on the people involved, resulting in a bonus of +3 on all future attempts in that skill involving the same people.

Combat: Increase the damage die roll by one before applying any multipliers.

17–20 Excellent: The Task or Test produced excellent results. Any artistic endeavor impresses the audience greatly, leading to a great deal of recognition and fame. Social skills have a future bonus of +4, as above.

Combat: Increase the damage die roll by two before applying any multipliers.

21–23 Extraordinary: The Task or Test produced amazing results, accomplishing far more than was intended. An artist gains fame after one such roll, but all his future accomplishments will be measured against this one, which may lead to the "one-shot wonder" label. Social skills gain a future bonus of +5, as above.

Combat: Increase the damage die roll by three before applying any multipliers.

24+ Mind-boggling: For every +3 to the total above 23, increase the Success Level by one and the social skills future bonus by +1.

Combat: Add +1 to the damage rolled for every additional Success Level.

Simon punches an opponent and his attack total amounts to 17 (Excellent: +2 damage bonus). Simon's normal punch damage is D4 x 3(6). Given his Success Levels, the damage is modified to (D4 + 2) x 3(12). Even on a bad damage roll, the attack inflicts a decent amount of damage.

GETTING SCARED

In the dark and dangerous settings of *Conspiracy X*, characters often experience frightful events. Indeed, in a world where aliens manipulate and abduct, or unimaginable terrors stalk the darkness, it's pretty likely that someone will witness extreme violence and terror. In such places, even the strong of heart get scared once in a while.

FEAR TESTS

When facing a fearsome creature or otherwise experiencing fright first-hand, characters must pass a Simple Willpower Test (employ a Difficult Test only if psychological or mental problems somehow weaken the character's resolve). If the Fear Test is failed, the victim succumbs to panic. Most of the time, the character will "freeze up" for at least a Turn. Alternatively, he may run away. Chroniclers who want to add more detail can consult the Fear Table.

FEAR MODIFIERS

Certain external circumstances make it easier for the character to feel afraid. Very gory and gruesome events add penalties of –1 to –4, depending on how graphic the violence is. Hideous creatures may bring penalties of –1 to –5. Some beings have alien or thoroughly evil auras that inspire a deep, instinctual fear in people; such creatures may bring penalties of –2 to –8 to all Fear Tests!

ESSENCE LOSS FROM FEAR

Losing one's nerve often results in a temporary Essence loss. If Essence is reduced below zero because of a terrifying experience, the character is mentally scarred by the ordeal. Maybe seeing the same creature again will drive the character into screaming hysterics — or maybe he will be obsessed with finding and killing it and all its kind. See the rules for Essence loss later in this chapter (p. 180) for more information, or consult the Fear Table.

USING THE FEAR TABLE

The Fear Table can be used when a character fails a Fear Test. The dice roll that resulted in the fail should be used to gauge how bad the Cast Member panics in the face of fear.

The Chronicler can use the Fear Table for guidance and inspiration, but he should not let dice rolls rule the game. If a result seems inappropriate at the moment or to the character, the Chronicler should devise his own outcome or result of the fear.

FEAR TABLE

Roll Result	Effect
7-8	**Shakes:** All the character's actions suffer a –2 penalty for one Turn. Lose one Essence point.
5-6	**Flight:** Victim runs away screaming for one Turn. If cornered, the victim may fight or react in a more rational way. Lose two Essence points.
4	**Physical reaction:** Fear causes a messy physical reaction (often involving bodily functions best left to the imagination). Not only is this embarrassing, it imposes a –2 penalty to all actions for D4(2) Turns. Lose D4(2) Essence points.
3	**Paralyzed:** The character cannot move for D4(2) Turns. Only intervention by another character (who may shake him, slap him, or otherwise force him to act) allow him to take any action. Lose D6(3) Essence points.
2	**Faint:** The shock and fear are so severe that the character collapses, unconscious. A Difficult Constitution Test is required to recover consciousness; this can be attempted every minute, or whenever somebody tries to stir the character. Lose D10 x 4(20) Endurance points and D8(4) Essence points.
1	**Total Hysterics:** The victim becomes a screaming, babbling, totally useless maniac for D8(4) Turns. Lose D10(5) Essence points.
0 or less	**It Gets Worse:** Lower results are left to the Chronicler's imagination. They may include life-threatening effects such as heart attacks or comas, or a bout of temporary insanity lasting hours, or worse . . . Chroniclers may also give the character an additional Mental Drawback suitable to the event (phobia, flashbacks, sleep disorder, etc.). No extra points are awarded from this, and the agent may have to endure months of therapy to overcome this ordeal.

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND EXTENDED TASKS

In the war against technologically advanced beings with exotic physiology, knowledge is power and scientific research is vital. Agents conduct research by attempting to achieve a number of breakthroughs or successes. Some research projects require only a single success to be fruitful, while others may require many, accumulated over an extended period of time. This is accomplished with an Extended Task. The Chronicler decides on the number of Success Levels required to make a breakthrough in the project. This can be modified depending upon the quality of the research area, the hastiness of the researcher, or additional external criteria.

As an example, trying to crack a difficult code in an alien language could require eight to ten Success Levels. The agents working on the project would make Intelligence and Science (Cryptography) Tasks; any Success Levels gained would be put toward the number needed for a breakthrough.

Multiple agents may contribute, although any additional researchers would contribute only half of the Success Levels they gain. The Chronicler should determine how long each attempt will take, or how much time should elapse between attempts, although a tricky project such as the example above could take a week for each attempt.

Extended Tasks can be used to reflect any continuous attempt to achieve something, whether a scientific discovery, the translation of an occult tome, or the extension of the agent's Influence (see p. 185). When the necessary number of Success Levels is reached, the "breakthrough" is achieved. Chroniclers may even ask for multiple breakthroughs for various parts of a project for it to be complete.

TIME

As any other story, a roleplaying game is a narrative that occurs over a specific length of time. The **Unisystem** uses everyday measures of time (seconds, minutes, hours, and days), saving the more arbitrary Turn measure (one to five seconds) for combat and similar tense situations.

Additionally, a distinction must be made between Game Time and Real Time. Game Time is the "fictional time" of the story. Real Time is what the players and Chronicler spend playing the game. Game Time is as fluid as the Chronicler decides it to be. A decisive event taking only a few minutes of Game Time may require the players to spend several hours of Real Time to resolve. For example, a combat with multiple participants may take seconds in Game Time, but many minutes in Real Time because character's lives are at stake. By the same token, a period of hours, days, or even years can be made to "flash by" in Real Time if the story demands it. "Well, after four days of rough travel, you reach the impact crater." Most of the **Unisystem** rules use Game Time and are designed to take as little Real Time as possible.

COMBAT

Conspiracy X is a game about conflicting organizations, and there is always a chance that confrontations become a life and death struggle. Combat is handled as any other Task. A character attempts to do what he wants (in combat, this usually entails inflicting bodily harm on others). Whether he is successful depends on his skill, what the target is doing to stop him (if anything), and the luck of the dice.

TURNS

Combat in the **Unisystem** can be as formal or as informal as the Chronicler desires. To simplify things, action is broken down into Turns. A Turn is a short length of time, about one to five seconds of Game Time in length. This is enough time for a normal person to perform one offensive combat Task, such as punching an enemy, firing a handgun, diving for cover, etc. The main reason for using Turns is to keep things organized. In a Turn, every character has a chance to do something, and may have something happen to him in return.

The Chronicler determines what action or actions are possible in a Turn. While people can theoretically do a lot of things in just a couple of seconds, combat situations are highly stressful. Something as simple as reloading a pistol can be delayed by adrenaline-induced trembling. It is easy to swing a baseball bat around, but actually delivering an aimed blow at a target requires concentration and deliberation. Remember, this applies both to the Cast Members and the Supporting Cast. Both human and alien opponents should suffer from fear, "buck fever," and other combat impairments. Common sense is the most important thing. Always remember that an extended action (emptying a gun at a target, for example) may prevent the character from doing anything else (such as diving for cover if somebody shoots back) during a given combat Turn.

RUNNING COMBAT

Each Turn gives enough time for all characters involved to perform or attempt to perform a desired action (within limits – some actions may take several Turns). The Turn may be broken down into six steps (see Turn Steps sidebar).

Ideally, an entire combat Turn should take no more than a couple of minutes of Real Time (very large groups entering combat will, of course, stretch that length of time). The Chronicler should eliminate any step he feels needlessly slows down a combat situation. Determining initiative is often a matter of common sense. Intentions can be summed up in a sentence or two, unless the Chronicler and the players enjoy detailed descriptions of action scenes. The actual dice-rolling is meant to be fairly quick; an attack-defense sequence can be solved in two rolls.

It is the Chronicler's job to describe the action. Rather than just say "You hit, and inflicted ten points of damage," descriptions should be more like "You shot the hideous creature in what could possibly be an arm. Green ooze seeps from the hole and it howls in pain. However, it is not backing away . . . it continues towards you, more determined." Keep the imagery lively; make the players feel that their Cast Members are in a dangerous situation. It is particularly effective when a Cast Member faces a supernatural horror that seems to be unaffected by regular weapons.

TURN STEPS

1. Intentions: The Chronicler asks each player what his character intends to do during the next Turn.

2. Initiative: The Chronicler determines who attacks first, or allows it to be determined randomly.

3. Performance: Attack, defense, and non-combat Tasks or Tests are performed, starting with the character with the highest Initiative.

4. Damage: Any damage inflicted by the results of the Performance step is applied to the target or targets (this can end the fight right then and there).

5. Repeat: Further Tasks are resolved and damage inflicted until each character has had a chance to act during the Turn.

6. End: The Turn ends and the process starts again back at step one.

INTENTIONS

At the beginning of each Turn, the Chronicler asks the players what their Cast Members' intentions are. Each player could say something as simple as "I duck for cover" or "I hit him with my baseball bat" or as complex as "I aim at the agent's head" or "I jump behind a crate, toss a grenade, and pray."

The Chronicler decides if the intention is possible, if it will take one Turn or less, and what skills are necessary. The Chronicler can point out to the player any risks or problems the action may bring about – if the player's Cast Member would know or understand those risks. Some Chroniclers let a player's intentions stand even if they are stupid or suicidal; others try to "coach" their players through every action. Both extremes are bad. There is nothing wrong with reminding a player of something he may have forgotten in the "heat of battle" (again, if it is something that his Cast Member would have noticed). On the other hand, some players may resent being told what to do all the time.

INITIATIVE

Most of the time, this should be a matter of common sense. The party or person who initiates the violence usually goes first at the beginning of a fight. Some circumstances may also affect initiative. Characters with ranged weapons usually attack before those holding close-combat weapons or no weapons at all. A supernatural or psychic attack, which requires only a thought to activate, goes before hand-to-hand or ranged attacks under most circumstances. Clearly, a character who sucker punches somebody goes first. A sniper firing on an unaware target half a mile away also automatically wins initiative. As always, the Chronicler has the last word.

After the first Turn of the fight, initiative depends on what happened in the previous Turn. Typically, the combatant who actually managed to land a blow or hurt his target goes first. The Chronicler can always decide who attacks first based on the particular circumstances at the time.

Initiative can also be determined randomly. To do so, each player who has a Cast Member in the situation rolls a D10 and adds the character's Dexterity. The highest result wins the initiative for that Turn and makes the first move. The remaining characters act in descending order of Initiative. The Chronicler may call for a new initiative roll for the next Turn, or retain the same initiative order as the previous Turn.

Note that certain Qualities and abilities can affect a character's initiative.

GROUP INITIATIVE

To speed up play, the Chronicler may decide to allow each discrete side of a combat or tense situation to roll for initiative instead of each character. Generally, this means only two rolls are made (one for the Cast Members and one for the Adversaries). The character on each side with the highest Dexterity provides the roll bonus.

This method, while faster, is less realistic. Furthermore, it allows all members of one side to attack or act before anyone on the other side attacks or acts. If the "bad guys" outnumber the Cast Members and gain Initiative, it could prove deadly.

PERFORMANCE

This step lumps together any Tasks or Tests required for the actions declared during the Intentions step. As such, a great many things can happen. Several are discussed below. For all others, Chroniclers should determine which Task or Test must be performed (if any), whether it takes more than an action or Turn, and the best interpretation of the results.

Multiple Actions

In general, each character may take one action without penalty in a Turn. More than one action may be performed, however. The main limitation is skill; dividing concentration is difficult. Each additional action taken in a Turn has a cumulative –2 penalty. In other words, taking one extra action is done at a –2 penalty, a third action is at –4, and so on. Any additional actions are done after all of the Cast Members involved have completed their primary actions.

In close combat, things work slightly differently. In that circumstance, characters may perform one attack and one defense Task or Test each Turn at no penalty. Any actions beyond that attack and defense suffer a cumulative –2.

Lennox, played by Doug, faces three NDD agents in close combat. The agents all attack him. Lennox punches one of them and tries to evade their attacks. His attack and one defensive move are free. The second defensive move is at –2, and the last one is at –4 — not surprisingly, the last attack strikes home, and the Black Book agent inflicts a nasty wound on Lennox.

CLOSE COMBAT

Close combat is any fight conducted at arm's length by people using fists, feet, or hand weapons (such as knives, swords, and sticks). In close combat, the character with initiative has the chance to strike first. The target may attempt a defensive maneuver, such as blocking the attack with a hand weapon of his own, dodging or jumping out of the way, or the like.

Striking at an enemy is a Task. Use the character's appropriate skill (Brawling, Martial Arts, Hand Weapon) and Dexterity. If the enemy has a hand weapon of his own, he can try to parry the attack, using his own weapon skill and Dexterity. Characters with Martial Arts can parry hand weapons with their bare hands; those with Brawling or no close combat skills cannot. Instead of parrying, the defender may dodge out of the way. This uses Dexterity and the Dodge skill (if the character has it), or must be resolved as a Difficult Dexterity Test (if not). So, even an unarmed, unskilled person may try to move out of the way of an attack by passing a Difficult Dexterity Test (it's not easy but neither is it impossible).

An attack and defense set is resolved as a Resisted Task. If the successful attacker has a higher result than the defender, his blow lands and inflicts damage. If the defender ties or gets a higher result, he manages to deflect or dodge the attack. Modifiers may be applied for lack of skill (see p. 155), light (see p. 168), and other external circumstances at the Chronicler's discretion. Success Levels in the attack may affect the damage calculation (see p. 159).

MULTIPLE ACTION OPTIONS

The multiple actions rule in the main text may result in players declaring numerous actions per Turn for their characters, as there is no downside (other than Chronicler annoyance, or storyline dictates) to doing so. For those wishing a slightly more complex approach, the following rules are suggested.

Cumulative and Universal Penalties: Each additional action declared in the Intentions step adds –2 to all actions that phase. That means if a character declares four attacks or four defenses in a Turn, each action suffers a –6 penalty (the first attack or defense has no penalty; each one after that incurs a cumulative –2). This allows characters to act as much as they want, at the expense of degrading all their actions.

Off-balance Penalties: Under this optional rule, each extra action taken in one Turn imposes a base –2 penalty to all actions in the next Turn. So, a character who takes three additional actions in one Turn suffers a –6 to all actions in the next. Again, the limit on actions is removed, but the frenzy of activity makes the character highly ineffective and vulnerable thereafter.

Interruptions: Another possibility is to have the player roll for each of the character's attacks and defenses, but if an attack is blocked or dodged, initiative switches over to the opponent. That agent then uses his actions until a defense is used successfully, when the first attacker resumes his actions (if any remain). In a one-on-many fight, the same sequence applies.

Jack attacks three times. He has one defense action in reserve. He rolls for the first attack, hits, and does damage. Then Jack rolls for the second attack (taking into account the –2 multiple action penalty) and his opponent blocks it. The opponent may attack now, as he has interrupted Jack's moves. The opponent throws a punch. Jack dodges it easily with his defense action. Now the action shifts back to Jack and he rolls for the third attack (taking into account a –4 multiple action penalty).

CLOSE COMBAT COMPLICATIONS

Some players may want more detail to their fights than simple attack and defense rolls. These optional rules are meant to accommodate this element. Chroniclers should reward good intention descriptions with a few bonuses in the appropriate Task rolls.

Aggressive Posture: The character goes all-out in his attack, abandoning any hope of defense to smash the enemy. This gives a +2 bonus on all attack Tasks performed that Turn, but no defense Task or Test may be made. This is a good tactic if the enemy is unarmed or if the character thinks he can take any damage inflicted by his opponent. Most of the time, though, it is too risky.

Counterstrike: This maneuver involves waiting for an attack, forgoing defense, and attacking at the same time. The advantage is the opponent cannot defend – in effect, both attacks hit if they achieve even a basic success. The disadvantage is that the character launching the counterstrike must survive the enemy's attack, which automatically hits first. The agent using the counterstrike automatically forgoes initiative; his attack goes into effect only if he is not disabled by his opponent's attack. This is usually a desperate, last-ditch attempt when fighting a superior opponent.

Defensive Posture: The character remains on the defensive, forsaking any chance to attack in favor of protection. A character using this tactic receives a +3 bonus on all defense Tasks or Tests he performs on that Turn, but he cannot attack. This is a good tactic for trying to keep a superior enemy busy while awaiting reinforcements or gauging an opponent's skill before making a move (judging the opponent's skill may require a Task involving Perception and the appropriate weapon skill, although if the attacker manages to hit despite the defensive posture, no roll is necessary).

Feint: A feint is a false attack meant to distract the enemy and lower his defenses against the real strike. The feint is resolved as a Resisted Task – the attacker's Intelligence and close combat skill against the opponent's Perception and close combat skill. The attacker's and defender's close combat skills need not be the same. The attacker might attempt the feint using Brawling skill, while the defender attempts to read the feint using a Martial Arts skill, for example. If the attacker wins the contest, he receives a +1 bonus on his next attack Task for each Success Level in the feint Task.

Prone: An agent on the ground suffers a –4 penalty to all actions (attacks or defenses) until he spends an attack action standing up. Also, on the Turn that he becomes prone, he may take not attack actions. A Flip martial arts move allows him to stand without using an action (see p. 166).

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Sometimes, a weapon is not at hand during a dangerous situation, and an improvised one (a broken bottle, a table leg, chair, etc.) must be used. Obviously, this is less effective than using a real, balanced weapon.

When using an improvised weapon, the character uses the closest weapon skill he has. Anything that involves thrusting sharp objects (broken bottles, forks, ice-picks, etc.) uses the Hand Weapon (Knife) skill (or Hand Weapon (Sword) skill, but at a –2 penalty due to the shorter reach). A longer, swung object could use the Hand Weapon (Club or Sword or similar weapon) skill. If no related Hand Weapon skill is available, use a Difficult Dexterity Test to strike or defend. Used defensively, a chair or similar large object actually acts as a shield, giving the character a +1 to +2 bonus to any roll attempting to parry. The Chronicler should assign penalties for large, heavy, and clumsy improvised weapons (–1 to –3 in most cases).

MARTIAL ARTS

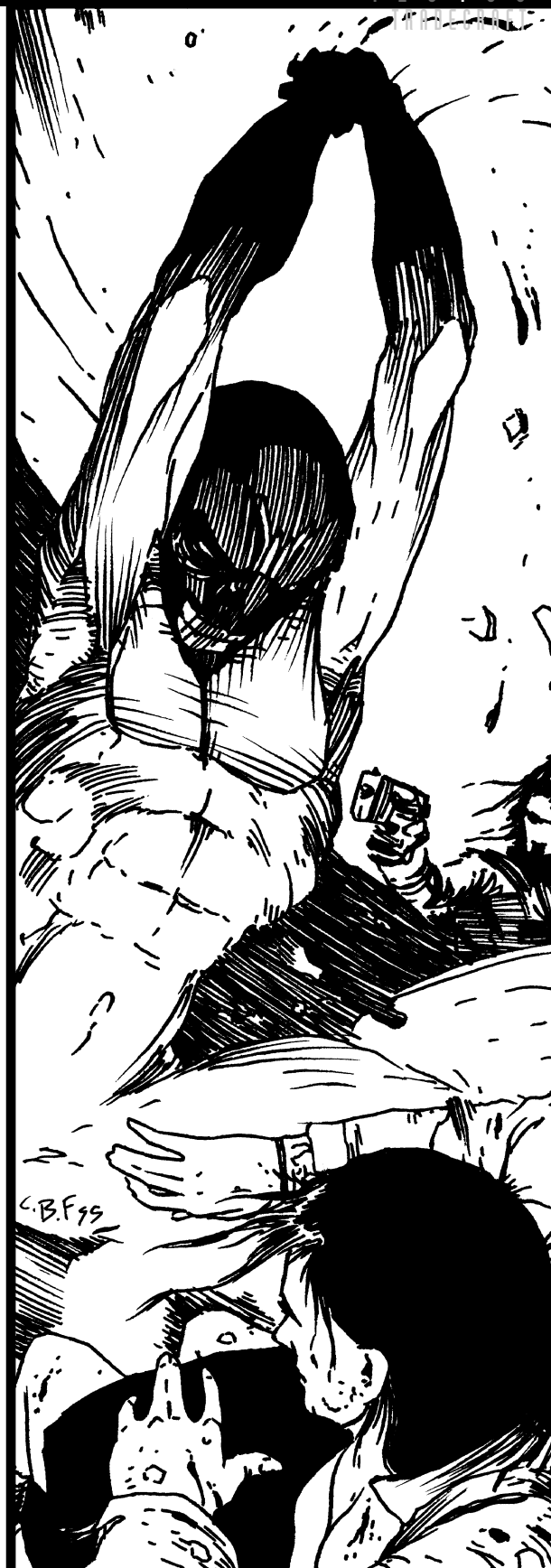
Guns make a lot of noise and attract a lot of unwanted attention, so many agents have undertaken rigorous martial arts training to take out the enemies with as little gunfire as possible. Chroniclers may wish to keep the agent's martial arts styles to basic kicks and punches, but given popular depictions of suited agents employing extreme martial arts, some players may wish to detail their agents' styles in more depth.

Purchasing the Martial Arts skill grants access to three core combat moves. The variety of martial arts styles is astounding, and no attempt is made here to categorize them. Each player should simply review the list of combat moves and decide which three make up the core studies of his style. Common moves are Punch, Kick, and Break Fall, but there is no reason why the character could not choose Head Butt, Back Kick, and Flip as core maneuvers. Each of the core combat moves is automatically learned at the same level as the Martial Arts skill.

For each level of Martial Arts skill, the character gains three points to purchase additional combat moves (and only additional combat moves). Each level of each additional combat move costs one point. Thus, a character with Martial Arts 3 would have nine points to spend.

No combat move level may be higher than a character's Martial Arts skill. The Martial Arts skill is increased as any other Special skill (see p. 184). Such an increase also raises each core combat move. A Martial Arts skill improvement also provides three points to spend on a one-for-one basis for already known additional combat moves. Otherwise, additional combat moves may be improved as Regular skills. New combat moves may be learned at the cost of six points for level one (which may be drawn from points granted by new Martial Arts skill increases or from experience points).

Jonathan is an accomplished agent with Martial Arts 5. He chooses Punch, Crescent Kick, and Roll with Blow as his core combat moves. Each of these defaults to level five. He also has 15 points with which to purchase additional combat moves. He decides on Arm Lock 3, Counterpunch 4, Stabbing Hand 4, and Trip 4. Later, Jonathan accumulates seven experience points and decides to improve himself to Martial Arts 6. Punch, Crescent Kick, and Roll with the Blow automatically rise to six. He also gains three points to spend on additional combat moves. Jonathan raises Arm Lock to four and Counterpunch to six.



Combos

Each combat move is a separate action. More than one move may be performed in a single Turn, but multiple action penalties apply if the normal allotment of one attack and one defense action is exceeded. This rule may be avoided if the individual combat move description provides otherwise.

Some penalties are negated when the martial artist has learned a specific combo, however. Combos are series of moves that are executed at one time as a single move (for example, "the old one-two – Punch-Punch, or a favorite of judo masters – Block-Grab-Judo Throw). Combos may be created from any moves that the agent has some skill in, as well as standard actions (such as block, dodge, weapon strike, etc.). The number of moves in the combo cannot exceed the character's Martial Arts skill level.

Combos are purchased as combat moves, the cost equal to the number of moves in the Combo (i.e., the Block-Grab-Judo Throw mentioned above would cost three points).

Combos are usually created through training, although they can be improvised in the heat of combat. In such a case, the number of moves in the combo can never exceed the Martial Arts skill of the combatant, and all moves are at a –1 penalty due to the unpracticed nature of the combo.

The martial artist declares the combo ("I shall attempt a Counterpunch-Punch-Kick combo.") and rolls for each move as normal. During a combo, the moves are not penalized for multiple actions, as technically the combo is one fluid movement. If any move within the combo is blocked, dodged, or fails on the roll, the combo is broken and all of the attacker's moves are considered used for that Turn (both attack and defense).

The defending martial artist may have a pre-designed defensive combo, starting with a defense move (for example, Block-Punch-Punch). There is no reason to have a defense action anywhere else in a combo. Successfully defending against any of the combo's moves can switch the initiative over to the defender (see Interruptions, p. 164).

Combat Move Descriptions

These are the kicks, punches, karate chops, and flips students can learn in any martial arts school. They take time and effort to master, but can really hurt when done correctly. Each move specifies the base damage inflicted by a successful strike.

Arm Lock: The character must have successfully parried an attack or executed a Grab move to use Arm Lock. Once successfully applied, damage may be inflicted once each Turn, without a Test or Task, until the Arm Lock is broken. *Damage:* Strength.

Back Kick: This move allows the character to attack targets behind him without turning around. On a failed Dexterity and Back Kick Task, the character must succeed at a second Dexterity and Martial Arts Task, or he becomes off-balance (–2 to all combat actions for the next Turn). On a roll of one, the character must pass a Dexterity and Martial Arts Task or he falls prone. *Damage:* D4(2) x Strength.

Break Fall: Each level of success in a Dexterity and Break Fall Task reduces the damage multiplier from falls by one level. Once the multiplier is reduced to one (or if it starts there, as in the case of Judo Throws and Trips), remaining Success Levels decrease the damage one point each. *Damage:* None.

Break Free: Breaking free from some kind of hold (Arm Lock, Choke, Grab, etc.) requires a Resisted Task between the attacker's and defender's Difficult Strength Tests. A Strength and Break Free Task may be used in place of either roll. *Damage:* None.

Break Neck: When a secure hold is kept on the head or neck, the attacker may attempt to break the neck by making a Resisted Strength and Break Neck Task versus the defender's Strength (doubled). If the attacker's roll is higher, the victim suffers damage. If the total reduces the target to –10 Life Points or lower, the victim must pass a Survival Test with a penalty equal to the attacker's Success Levels in the Break Neck Task. Failing this Survival Test means the target's neck has been fatally broken. *Damage:* (D4(2) x Strength) x 2.

Choke: Before this maneuver can be attempted, the character must succeed at a Grab. After that, the attacker's Strength and Choke Task is resisted by the target's Strength and Constitution Test. If the attacker's result is higher, the target receives the damage listed. Furthermore, his breathing is restricted (see p. 176). The defender is at –2 on all actions while being choked. If the defender wins the Resisted Test, no damage is taken. *Damage:* Strength – 1.

Counterpunch: A quick follow-up punch to a successful parry. Each level of success in the defense Task adds +1 to the immediately following Counterpunch attack roll. *Damage:* D4(2) x Strength.

Crescent Kick: A powerful circular kick. This attack suffers the same unbalancing risk as the Back Kick Move. *Damage:* D6(3) x Strength.

Disarm: The Dexterity and Disarm Task is resisted by the target's Dexterity and weapon skill. If the attacker wins, the weapon is dropped or tossed away. *Damage:* None.

Elbow: A close-in attack that does not injury the hand. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength –1).

Eye Gouge: On a successful attack with a –4 penalty, the target's eye is struck. The victim suffers a –3 penalty to any Task or Test that requires vision for as many Turns as triple the damage suffered. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength –1).

Flip: When prone, the character may attempt a Dexterity and Flip Task to get up without using an action. If successful, the character may act normally that Turn (performing both an attack and a defense action). Failure uses a defense action, and the character remains on the ground. *Damage:* None.

Grab: Much more than a quick clutch or tenuous grasp, a Dexterity and Grab Task secures a limb or the torso in a solid hold. A successful Grab allows the attacker to employ one additional combat move in the same Turn without incurring a multiple action penalty for that move. A Grab may also follow a parry or dodge defense action with no multiple action penalty to either maneuver. *Damage:* None.

Head Butt: On a failed Dexterity and Head Butt Task, the attacker suffers the damage. *Damage:* D4(2) x Strength.

Jab: A light, fast punch that can be used twice in a Turn without incurring multiple action penalties. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength–1).

Judo Throw: The character must have successfully parried an attack or executed a Grab move to use Judo Throw. A successful Dexterity and Judo Throw Task knocks the target prone. *Damage:* D4(2).

Jump Kick: On a failed Dexterity and Jump Kick Task, the character must pass a Difficult Dexterity Test or fall prone, suffering D4(2) points of damage. *Damage:* D6(3) x (Strength + 2).

Kick: This attack suffers the same unbalancing risk as the Back Kick move. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength + 1).

Knee Strike: Although commonly aimed at the target's vulnerable area (below the belt), this attack can be combined with other moves to strike other areas (grabbing the head and kneeing in the face is a classic move). It doesn't really do a lot of damage, but if hit in the vitals, the target needs to pass a Difficult Constitution Test or be stunned and lose his next action. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength – 1).

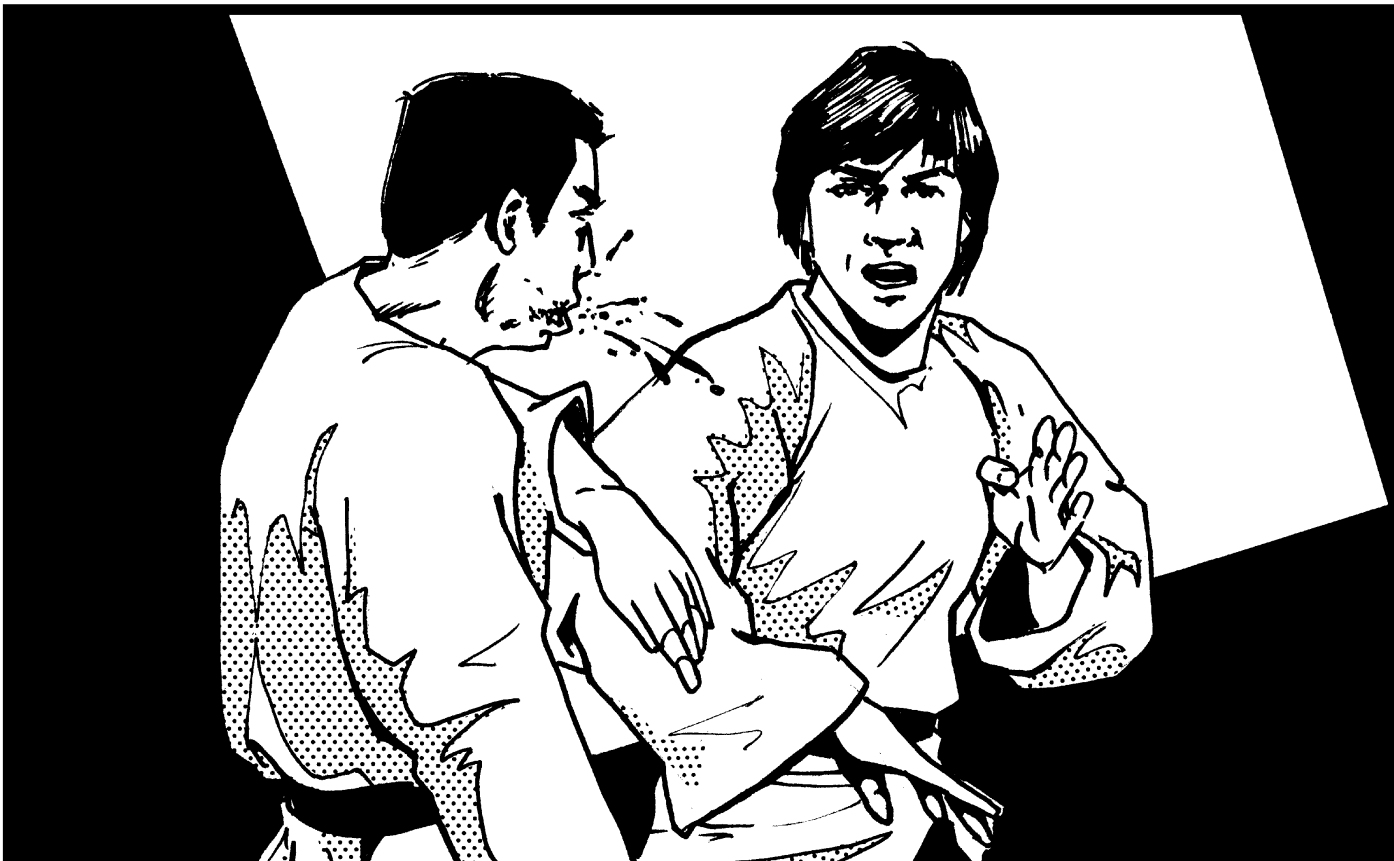
Punch: Closed fist, extended arm. *Damage:* D4(2) x Strength.

Roll with Blow: This move is used whenever the character has been successfully hit in hand-to-hand or melee combat, and does not use an action. It is tested immediately after a blow lands but before damage is calculated. Each Success Level in a Dexterity and Roll with Blow Task reduces the damage multiplier of the attack by one (if the multiplier is reduced to zero, no damage is inflicted). Successive Roll with Blow moves in one Turn suffer cumulative –2 penalties. *Damage:* None.

Roundhouse: A big swinging fist attack. The attacker may make no other attack actions in a Turn that he uses Roundhouse. *Damage:* D6(3) x Strength.

Stabbing Hand: A quick strike with a pointed hand. On die roll of one, the attacker suffers D4(2) of damage. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength + 1).

Shove: This move uses a Strength and Shove Task against the target's Strength and Dexterity Test, or Strength and Martial Arts Task. If the attacker wins, the target is pushed back one yard per Success Level and must pass a Simple Dexterity Test minus the Success Level of the Shove or fall prone. *Damage:* None.



Spin Kick: Other than the increased damage, this move is the same as the Kick Move and suffers the same unbalancing risks. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength + 2).

Sucker Punch: If the attacker's Intelligence and Sucker Punch Task beats the opponent's Simple Perception Test, the target cannot defend against the punch. *Damage:* D4(2) x Strength.

Trip: A successful Dexterity and Trip Task knocks the opponent prone. *Damage:* D6(3).

Gun Fu

Gun Fu is a modern close combat technique that uses a pistol as an extension of the combatant's body. Students of Gun Fu train using pistols in much the same way that students of other martial arts use more traditional weapons such as sai, swords, and knives. Only small, one-handed ranged weapons can be used, and these moves can be used only at close range. Gun Fu students employ a blur of kicks, blocks (some using the weapons), blows (using either the weapon butt or jabs with the barrel), and gunshot attacks. Gun Fu moves can be used alone or added to combos.

Draw Pistol: Draw Pistol may be incorporated into combos as every other move and allows a fighter with a holstered pistol to draw it in preparation for a Shoot or Pistol Whip move. *Damage:* None.

Pistol Whip: The agent uses the butt of the pistol to deliver a sharp blow. *Damage:* D4(2) x (Strength + 1).

Shoot: Damage: Varies. This is the move that makes Gun Fu such a devastating technique. The combatant may fire his weapon at his opponent using this as a skill. His level in Shoot can never be higher than his Guns (Handgun) skill or his Martial Arts skill, and the target must be within close combat range. This attack can be blocked by another martial artist, by knocking the pistol out of the way before or while the shot is fired.

RANGED COMBAT

Ranged combat involves any sort of missile weapon, from a thrown stone to a machine gun to a rocket. For the most part, attack Tasks involve Dexterity and the appropriate ranged combat skill. Range, lighting, and other modifiers affect the Task.

AIMING

A character may take some time to aim his weapon. This delays his attack to the end of the Turn (giving the target a chance to fire first, move behind cover, or perform other actions), but it makes the attack more likely to hit. Aiming is a Task involving the character's Perception and weapon skill; each Success Level adds a +1 bonus to his attempt to strike.

Ranges

Each weapon listing contains a set of five range numbers. These are expressed in yards for the most part, and correspond to point-blank, short, medium, long, and extreme range. Point-blank shots gain a bonus to hit, and increase the damage multiplier by one. Long range shots suffer a penalty, and decrease the damage multiplier by one. Extreme range shots suffer a greater penalty and decrease the damage multiplier by two. The Ranged Combat Modifiers Table has more information.

MODIFIERS

Modifiers to ranged weapon attacks are listed in the Ranged Combat Modifiers Table. If looking for modifiers takes too long, the Chronicler should feel free to dispense with them or determine them on the spot.

RANGED COMBAT MODIFIERS TABLE

Point-blank Range: +1 to attack Tasks, and add one to the damage multiplier.
Short Range: No modifier.
Medium Range: –1 to attack Tasks.
Long Range: –3 to attack Tasks, and reduce damage multiplier by one.
Extreme Range: –6 to attack Tasks, and reduce damage multiplier by two.
Poor Lighting Conditions (a dark alley, candlelight, moonlight): –1 to attack Tasks.*
Bad Lighting Conditions (moonless night): –4 to attack Tasks.*
Total Darkness: Use a D10 roll with no other modifiers; only a natural roll of nine or higher strikes the target. If a character makes a Difficult Perception Test, he can add each Success Level to the D10 roll, accounting for the use of senses other than sight to spot the target.*
Multiple Shots: –1 for each additional shot, or –2 if the weapon has heavy recoil.
Multiple Burst Fire: –3 for each burst after the first, cumulative for each additional burst.
Multiple Rock-n-roll Fire: Cumulative –4 for each additional spray after the first.
Gun Scopes: A telescopic scope adds +2 to +5 to any aiming Tasks.

* Lighting modifiers also apply to close combat attacks.

DODGING RANGED FIRE

Although dodging a ranged attack is the only type of action allowed during a Turn, more than one ranged attack may be dodged. To keep things simple, use the Dodge Task for all attacks directed at the target. If more detail is desired, allow for multiple rolls. Multi-action penalties apply only if the circumstances warrant them. If the character is ducking for cover from a volley of fire coming from the same direction, no penalties should apply – the character is effectively dodging once. If the character is dancing around multiple shots (as in *The Matrix*) then penalties should apply. Alternatively, a single roll could be made and penalties applied to the results rather than forcing multiple rolls.

DEFENSES

In ranged combat, the target has precious few choices. He can stand his ground and fire back, hoping the attacker misses, or he can duck for cover. Ducking for cover uses a Dexterity and Dodge Task. If the result is greater than or equal to the attacker's Task result, the target was able to hit the ground or jump behind cover in time to avoid the shot. The only problem with the tactic is that it is the only action the target can take on that Turn. For the most part, firefights are dominated by the group that fires first; the targets are pinned down and cannot fight back.

FIRING MULTIPLE SHOTS

One to five seconds is a long time for modern automatic and semiautomatic firearms. An average submachine gun has a cyclic rate (the number of bullets fired if the trigger is kept pressed) of more than 600 rounds per minute – 10 shots are fired in one second! Even a semiautomatic pistol and double-action revolver (which fire as fast as the trigger is pulled) can be emptied in less than five seconds. The main drawback of firing multiple shots is that most rounds miss the target. While rapid-firing, automatic weapons experience "muzzle climb" as the gun bucks and fires higher and higher up. Semiautomatics also experience aim-ruining recoil.

Semiautomatic Multiple Shots: Any weapon that fires a shot every time the trigger is pulled can fire multiple times in a Turn. Each successive shot gains a cumulative –1 penalty (i.e., the second shot is at –1 to hit, the third shot is at –2, and so on). If the gun has a heavy recoil (a .44 magnum, for example), the penalty is a cumulative –2. As with all multiple actions, all parties involved may fire or act once before successive shots are resolved.

Automatic Fire – Bursts: The most efficient way to fire an automatic weapon is to shoot short bursts of three to five shots. This allows the shooter to maintain control of his weapon. A burst fires at no penalty. Each Success Level in the Task means the attacker scores a hit, up to the total number of bullets in the burst. For example, a shooter firing a three-shot burst who scores two Success Levels hits with two bullets, each doing damage separately. Success Levels affect only the number of hits; they do not affect the damage (no damage multipliers from the Outcome Table apply). If the character racks up three Success Levels or more, all three rounds strike the target. If firing multiple bursts, each successive burst suffers a cumulative –3 penalty.

Automatic Fire – Rock 'n Roll: A favorite in the movies, this is when the shooter keeps the trigger depressed and "hoses" the target with a stream of bullets. In reality, most of the bullets fired are going to go high as the gun's muzzle is forced up by the constant recoil. Each collection of ten shots counts as a group; make a strike Task for each group. Each Success Level means one bullet hits in that group. Again, Success Levels affect only the number of hits and do not affect the damage (no damage multipliers from the Outcome Table apply). Each group of shots after the first suffers a cumulative –4 penalty.

Automatic Fire – Suppressive Fire: Automatic fire can be used to "sweep" an area, suppressing any targets there (i.e., making them kiss the ground and pray for deliverance) and hitting anybody stupid enough to stick their head into the "beaten zone" (the area the shots are spraying). No roll is made; the character need only state his intention to spray an area with gunfire. Assume that most automatic small arms sweep an area the size of a doorway or two. Anybody straying into the area will be struck by D4(2) shots.

SHOTGUNS

For the most part, shotguns use two types of missiles: shot (small pellets contained in a cartridge) and slugs (solid shot). Shot scatters, creating a "cone" of bullets that spreads over distance. It is thus easier to hit a target with shot than with a normal bullet. Characters using a shotgun loaded with birdshot (the smallest pellets) gain a +2 bonus to strike targets at any range; with buckshot (larger pellets), apply a +1 bonus. Slugs are treated as normal bullets. Shotgun damage is covered later in this chapter (see p. 172).

RANGED EXPLOSIVES

Ranged explosives use a Strength and Throwing (Sphere) Task (for grenades and thrown explosives) or a Dexterity and Guns Task (for rocket propelled grenades and fired explosives). They are subject to scattering (not hitting their target directly but still doing damage). More than three Success Levels place the target in contact at Ground Zero. Three Success Levels place the target at Ground Zero but not in contact. Two Success Levels produce the General Effect damage, and a single Success Level does only Maximum Range damage. If the Task or Test is failed, the grenade bounces far enough away to do no damage to the target. It may land close enough to someone else to do damage, however, at the Chronicler's discretion. These areas of effect and explosive damages are explained later in this chapter (see p. 172).

HEAVY WEAPON SKILLS

Use Guns (Missile Launcher) for any man-portable anti-tank or anti-aircraft weapon. Artillery uses the Guns (Artillery) skill, although the skill is used mainly to position the gun – computers do most of the shooting. Vehicle weapons (cannon, bombs, and the like) also use the Guns skill. Each vehicle weapon system counts as a Type, so the crew of a tank would know the Guns (Tank) Skill, while the pilot of a fighter-bomber would know the Guns (Fighter-Bomber) skill. In general, bombs and artillery should be treated as something that just happens on the battlefield. Except for calling in an air-strike, most characters have little control over these weapons and will rarely need such skills.

CINEMATIC COMBAT RULES

Conspiracy X can be played in a cinematic fashion – as some of the agents are "superpowered" by alien technology or are powerful psychics, why not go all the way and allow actions possible only on the silver screen? Cinematic combat is meant to be fast and furious, with the protagonists able to mow down large numbers of inferior foes. The Chronicler should decide beforehand which of these rules (if any) will be used in the game and let the players know. These rules are not suitable for gritty and realistic conspiracy-heavy games.

Reduced Rolls: This rule uses rolls only for the actions of important characters. Cannon fodder adversaries use flat attack and defense Scores. To determine these numbers, take the adversary's Dexterity and appropriate skill (weapon skill for attack or Dodge for defense) and add six to it. The adversaries also use the flat damage values for their weapons, rather than rolling them. This value is listed in parentheses next to each damage roll in the weapons tables. Instead of rolling damage or armor dice, simply apply the set number each time a hit is scored. This method reduces combat rolls by half. On the other hand, the role of luck is also halved. The method can help speed up combat a great deal, however, and is recommended when several characters are involved.

Two-Gun Shooting: In real life, shooting with a gun in each hand just makes noise and spends ammo. In cinematic games, characters can shoot handguns with both hands, with a –1 penalty for the off-hand. Recoil penalties accumulate separately for each pistol.

Shoot and Dodge: Characters who shoot while making acrobatic leaps (in the John Woo tradition) can use Acrobatics or Dodge while they fire. Both the shooting and the Acrobatics or Dodge Tasks incur a –2 penalty. The Acrobatics or Dodge result is used in a Resisted Task against any and all ranged fire attacks directed against the agent that Turn. Only ranged attack results higher than the Acrobatics or Dodge result hit.

Healing Luck: Characters with the Good Luck Quality (see p. 69) can use one of their luck bonuses when they receive an injury. Doing this reduces damage by D10(5) points or by half, whichever is greater, before any damage modifiers are applied. This simulates lucky breaks – just a flesh wound, the bullet hit the character's lucky coin, the agent rolled with the punch, and so on.

KEEPING YOUR COOL

Few people remain controlled and calm while under fire. Most freeze or panic. Only the very brave, the very stupid, and combat veterans are likely to keep their cool and do the right thing when every instinct in their bodies is telling them to start running, NOW! Chroniclers wishing to run a heroic game are free to dispense with this factor, although its use may discourage hotheaded players from getting their Cast Members into firefights at the drop of a hat.

When being shot at, a character must pass a Simple Willpower Test to continue carrying out his original intention. A failed result means the character freezes or hesitates, and loses any chance to act in that Turn. This rule also applies to the Supporting Cast – sometimes it is a good idea to fire blindly in the general direction of one's enemies, if only to make them "keep their heads down."

DAMAGE

Once a character hits a target (or the enemy hits the Cast Member), damage is inflicted. Damage is measured by marking off the target's Life Points. If Life Points are reduced to zero or below, the character is critically injured and at risk of dying.

Most forms of damage in the **Unisystem** are determined by rolling a die; the result is then multiplied by a set number (called, for obvious reasons, the multiplier). For example, a .22 pistol does D4 x 2 points of damage. In this case determine damage by rolling a four-sided die and multiplying the damage by two (the multiplier).

Some weapons have a variable multiplier. Most hand weapons, for example, do damage based on the Strength of the wielder. A baseball bat wielded by a ten-year-old does not do as much damage as the same bat in the hands of a champion weightlifter.

Damage values for normal punches, kicks, and a number of different weapons are detailed in **Chapter Three: Ops Center**. Damage suffered by other forms of injury appear later in this chapter.

OH, GOD — I'VE BEEN SHOT!

When a person is injured (and they realize it – some people may be unaware of even mortal wounds for some time), his first reaction is usually shock and fear. Even if the wound is not lethal, the typical person will collapse, scream, and do a number of useless things. Only people driven by rage, drugs, or pure determination (or too stupid to know better) carry on with a fight despite their wounds. To simulate this, the Chronicler may require characters who have been injured in combat to pass a Simple Willpower Test before continuing their fight. A penalty proportional to the damage taken by the character may be applied to the Test. This penalty is left to the discretion of the Chronicler – a dramatic fight should not be slowed down because the protagonist was wounded. In such cases, the Chronicler can rule that the character is so determined (and pumped full of adrenaline) that he shrugs off any wound that does not kill him.

TARGETING BODY PARTS

These rules can be used for dramatic purposes, but they add more complexity to combat. The following chart determines the penalty to the attack and the modifier to the damage inflicted. Damage bonuses occur after armor reductions (if the target is not wearing armor in that area, all damage is modified accordingly).

Head: –4 to hit. Blunt damage is doubled; slashing/stabbing damage is tripled. Bullet damage is modified by two levels (armor-piercing bullets inflict triple damage, normal bullets inflict four times damage, etc.). Endurance Point damage (in non-lethal combat) is quadrupled.

Neck/Throat: –5 to hit. Blunt damage is doubled; slashing/stabbing damage is quadrupled. A slashing attack on this area that does enough damage to kill the victim (a failed Survival Test) results in decapitation. Bullet damage is modified by one level (armor-piercing bullets inflict double damage, and so on).

Arms/Legs: –2 to hit. Damage in excess of one-third maximum Life Points cripples the limb; extra damage is lost.

Hand/Wrist/Foot/Ankle: –4 to hit. Damage in excess of one-quarter maximum Life Points cripples the area. Extra damage is lost.

Vital Points (heart, lungs, spine, kidneys, etc.): –2 to hit. Blunt damage is doubled; slashing/stabbing damage is tripled. Bullet damage is modified by one level (see Neck/Throat bullet damage).

SPECIAL WEAPON TYPES AND DAMAGES

Not all weapons are created equal. Some inflict harm differently than others.

Two-handed Weapons: Close-combat weapons used two-handed raise the effective Strength of the wielder by one. For example, a Strength 3 character wielding an axe two-handed has an effective Strength 4 for purposes of damage.

Slashing/Stabbing Weapons: Edged or pointed weapons have a better chance of inflicting damage on their victims. An edge can slice muscle tissue and even chop through bone. A point can reach deep into a target's vital organs. To simulate this, any slashing or stabbing damage that is applied to a target (after taking into account any armor reductions) is doubled.

Normal Bullets: A normal jacketed bullet tends to corkscrew and ricochet inside the human body, shattering bone, piercing vital organs, and doing assorted forms of mayhem. Thus, normal bullet damage is doubled after penetrating armor.

Hollow-point Bullets: An expanding bullet creates a greater wound cavity and tends to spend more of its energy inside the victim's body as the bullet flattens and mushrooms inside flesh. Armor stops these bullets more easily, however. Double any Armor and Barrier Value between the target and the bullet, but any damage that goes through is tripled.

Armor-piercing Bullets: These high-velocity, solid rounds punch through armor and obstacles, but they also tend to punch through the target in a relatively flat trajectory, doing reduced damage. Armor-piercing rounds halve any Armor or Barrier Value in their path, but the damage inflicted is not modified.

Shotguns: Slugs are treated as normal bullets, with damage doubled when hitting flesh (there are also hollow-point slugs). Shot damage does not double, and any armor worn is doubly effective against it (even heavy clothing affords some protection against the lighter birdshot used in hunting shotguns).

Explosives: Explosions inflict damage in two ways. First is the shockwave, which is nothing more than gas or air traveling at tremendous speeds. More dangerous are the fragments the shockwave throws around at bullet speed. Fragments come either from debris created by anything the shockwave encounters (bricks, earth, rocks) or from specially designed metal casings or shrapnel (the metal case of most bombs is designed to break into jagged metal fragments to inflict maximum damage; some pipe bombs are filled with nails or ball bearings for the same reason). The shockwave damage is rapidly reduced by distance; fragment damage is not.

To make matters simpler, **Unisystem** explosive damage is expressed as one value, which takes into consideration both fragmentation and shockwave damage. Simple concussive devices do less damage than fragmentary ones. There are three areas of effect: Ground Zero (very close to the explosion), General Effect (the area of most widespread damage after Ground Zero), and the Maximum Range (the area after which the explosion ceases to inflict significant damage). The ranges of most common explosives are listed in **Chapter Three: Ops Center** (p. 129). These measures are not strictly scientific and accurate, but any more detail bogs most games down needlessly; some Chroniclers may wish to simplify matters by only using the General Effect damage. Body armor is largely ineffective against concussion (Ground Zero damage). Only fully sealed armor (such as that used by ordnance disposal teams) protects with its full Armor Value at any range; normal body armor protects with half its Armor Value at Ground Zero and normal AV at other ranges. Being in direct contact with the

explosive device upon detonation inflicts double the Ground Zero damage. This also applies to being hit by rockets or adhesive explosives.

Another form of explosive damage is that used in rockets and antitank weapons. These weapons use the shaped-charge effect to penetrate armor (of vehicles and other hard targets) better. Those missiles divide the Armor or Barrier Values of a target by a number depending on the effectiveness of the weapon.

POISON

Poisons are foreign substances that, when introduced into a person's body, cause harm, injury, or death. They include manufactured chemicals and substances secreted or injected by animals or supernatural creatures. In the real world, some poisons can kill a person instantly, while others have varying degrees of lethality. As a weapon, poison is often unreliable and can be as dangerous to the wielder as to the intended victim.

Poisons all have a Delivery Method (how the poison is applied) and a Strength Rating (its lethality). The Delivery Method is either ingested (eaten), injected, or contact. Some poisons may be applied in more than one way, but their effectiveness may vary according to how they are delivered.

The Strength Rating determines how much damage the poison inflicts or how difficult it is to resist its effects. The Strength Rating of a poison depends on the type of toxin.

There are three basic kinds of poisons: corrosive, irritant, and narcotic (also known as nerve poisons). Each kind has its own characteristics.

Corrosive poisons include a number of acids and several common cleaning fluids. They can burn the skin directly, inflicting a number of points of damage every Turn the person is exposed (being splashed with the liquid means the victim is exposed until the corrosive is washed off with water). If ingested, they do the same damage until the poison is neutralized with an antidote or ejected by vomiting.

CORROSIVE DAMAGE TABLE

Poison Strength Rating	Damage
1	1
2	D4(2)
3	D6(3)
4	D8(4)
5	D10(5)
6	D6 x 2(6)

Irritants include such poisons as arsenic. They are more slow-acting and require multiple doses. Instead of direct damage, the poison slowly drains Life Points, typically one point per every two Strength Rating of the poison, for every dose ingested. For example, if the poison has a Strength 1, damage occurs after two doses. This Life Point damage can be healed only if the poison is purged from the system. When the victim's Life Points are reduced to zero, the victim may die (a Survival Test postpones death).

Narcotic or nerve poisons include curare, chloroform, and strychnine. They directly depress the victim's nervous system and such functions as breathing. They can induce unconsciousness, paralysis, or death. These poisons do not inflict damage directly. Instead, they use a Simple Strength Test against a Simple Constitution Test by the victim. If the poison's Strength wins the contest, the victim suffers the poison's specific effects. Typically they include drowsiness or unconsciousness (for weak narcotics) to heart or respiratory arrest (resulting in death by suffocation unless first aid or medical care is immediately provided).

Some sample poisons are discussed below. Chroniclers can devise game mechanics for other poisons based on these.

Cobra Venom: This powerful corrosive neurotoxin has an average fatality rate. The Delivery Method is injection. Depending on the species, this venom has a Strength of three to six. Each bite injects one dose and inflicts corrosive damage based on its Strength for five Turns. For example, the bite of a relatively weak cobra (Strength 4 venom) would inflict D8(4) points of damage for five Turns. If the bite is drained, the venom does half damage. After administration, an antitoxin prevents further damage. A cobra can bite more than once in a 24-hour period, but the strength of the venom drops one level per subsequent bite, as the dosage is reduced. In the example above, the cobra's next bite would do D6(3) points of damage. On the other hand, if the cobra bit the same person twice or more, the damage would be cumulative.

Some cobras can spit venom. It is treated as a Strength 1 corrosive (one point). If the venom hits a victim's eyes (1 in 10 chance or Chronicler's discretion), he must pass a Difficult Constitution Test or be blinded for one hour. After that, a Simple Constitution Test with +4 bonus must be passed, or the blindness becomes permanent.

Arsenic: This irritant poison can be found in some insecticides and weed killers. In the ancient world, arsenic oxide, which is colorless and flavorless, was a favored poison, although its effects take time and people can actually develop an immunity by ingesting small doses.

The Delivery Method is ingestion. A large dose of arsenic has Strength 6 and inflicts three points of damage per hour until the poison is removed (usually by inducing vomiting, although a full stomach pump in a hospital is preferred). Smaller doses have Strength 2 and inflict one point of damage per day. Symptoms of gradual poisoning (ingesting one small dose daily for five or more days) include weakness (reduce Strength by one and Endurance Points by 10), stomach problems, slight disorientation (reduce Intelligence by one), and a greenish pigmentation of the skin. Each dose adds to the daily damage (after five days of gradual poisoning, the victim would suffer from five points of damage per day). Medical attention quickly eliminates all traces of arsenic from a person's system, however.

Curare: Curare is a nerve poison that paralyzes and may kill. The natives of the Amazon use it to bring down large game, often dropping small deer in their tracks with one arrow or blowgun hit.

Curare may be administered through poisoned darts or other injection, with each application having a Strength 4 dose. Additional darts or doses increase this Strength by one level (i.e., three hits with darts have a combined Strength 6). If the victim fails a Simple Constitution Test against the poison's Simple Strength Test, the victim's Dexterity is reduced by one level per Success Level of the poison's Strength Test. If Dexterity is reduced to zero, the victim is totally paralyzed and unable to move. If the Success Levels of the poison are greater than the victim's Constitution + 1 (three Success Levels for the average Constitution 2 person), the victim's heart stops and he dies in 20 minutes unless medical or magical healing is applied. Even if the victim wins the Resisted Test, his Dexterity is reduced by one level per dose! The effects of curare (if the victim survives) last for (6 – Constitution) hours (minimum one hour).

Talented Healing and Poisons: Any paranormal power, such as bio-psychokinesis, that heals injuries can undo the damage inflicted by corrosive and irritant poisons. If the poison is still in the victim's system, it must be removed or the damage or effect continues even if the previous damage was cured. Psychic powers that cause the body to expel the poison requires a Resisted Task.

DISEASE

Diseases have three major game characteristics: Vector (how the disease is transmitted), Contagion Strength (how easy it is to catch it), and Severity (how much damage it inflicts).

Vectors include airborne (the virus or bacteria can survive in the air for some time, infecting anyone who breathes it), vermin (an insect, rat, or other living being transmits the disease), body contact (the victim must be in some form of casual contact: touching or sharing sleeping quarters), waste (drinking or eating things contaminated with the waste products of the diseased; this may also be caused by insects who contaminate food or drink), and bodily fluids (transmitted through intimate contact, blood transfusions, and so on).

If the character is exposed to the disease, Contagion Strength is used in a Resisted Test (Simple Contagion Strength Test versus the victim's Simple Constitution Test) to see if he catches the disease. Prolonged exposure, unsanitary conditions, and so on may produce penalties of –1 to –6 to the Constitution Test. Weakness due to wounds or exhaustion could transform the Constitution Test to a Difficult one.

RADIATION DOSAGE EFFECT TABLE

Dose (rems)	Effect
100-150	The character suffers a headache, nausea, vomiting or nosebleeds. Endurance is reduced by one third and, depending upon the amount of time exposed, a victim may have to spend weeks in hospital to recover. At this level, radiation exposure is completely survivable, if painful.
151-450	The character's skin begins to peel, and hemorrhaging occurs along the exposed areas. There is some hair loss, and the immune system begins to shut down. There is damage to the bone marrow. Immediately after exposure, the character loses one level of Constitution and five Life Points. Within six hours of exposure, the victim is totally incapacitated (reduce Life Points to zero), and requires blood transfusions and antibiotics to pull through (use normal healing rules).
451-1,000	Vomiting occurs, as does severe bleeding from all body openings. The character loses all his hair permanently, and the outer layers of damaged skin slough off as if severely burned. Within an hour, the victim loses one level of Constitution and is reduced to –20 Life Points (Survival Rolls, using the reduced Constitution are needed to survive). Recovery requires six months of hospital care. Recovery rolls can only be performed with medical care, and never result in more than one Life Point healed per day.
1,001-4,000	The victim suffers damage to the central nervous system. Within D10(5) minutes, the victim will collapse with an extreme fever, and the whole body begins to bleed and swell. Even if he survives, the character will never be the same again. He loses one level of Constitution permanently, and a second level that can only be recovered after six months of medical care. He is automatically reduced to –40 Life Points (survival rolls use the reduced Constitution level).
4,000+	The character is probably fatally exposed. He suffers traumatic damage to blood vessels and the brain. He is reduced to –60 Life Points automatically.

The Severity (Mild, Moderate, Serious, or Terminal) determines how much damage the disease inflicts. Severity effects include Task penalties (due to the debilitating effect of the disease), and Endurance and Life Point loss. Mild diseases inflict no permanent damage. Moderate diseases incapacitate the character and may inflict damage, especially if not treated. Serious diseases inflict damage and may have lethal effects. Terminal diseases kill. Chroniclers wishing to introduce disease in their game may want to do some research and then use the guidelines here to put them in gaming terms.

Some sample diseases are discussed below.

The Common Cold: This disease is typically airborne and has Strength 6 (very easy to catch) and relatively mild Severity (–1 to –2 to all Tasks for a day or two). Reduce Endurance by one third while the person is sick.

Ebola: Transmitted through body contact (although an airborne version might be concocted by some germ warfare lab some day), this disease has an incubation period of a few days. It has Strength 4-6, and the Severity is Terminal. When the symptoms appear, the patient suffers a –1 penalty to all Attributes; a further –1 is imposed per day (cumulative). Symptoms include fever, pain, and aches similar to the flu. In a day or two, internal bleeding begins (–6 Life Points on the first day, and an additional D10 + 6 points per day thereafter). Survival Tests suffer a –4 and only one roll is allowed.

RADIATION

Radioactive particles cause damage both by direct collision with the tissue, and by long-term genetic damage to the cells of the body. Radiation is measured in rems (or Roentgen Equivalent in Man). For ease of play, various levels of exposure are detailed on the Radiation Dosage Effect Table. Any exposed Cast Member continues to suffer the effects at that level until decontaminated and given medical attention. The table lists the consequences of exposure from one or more sources. If the character successfully resists the radiation (a Simple Constitution Test versus a Simple Strength Test of the radiation, Strength 6), the effect is reduced by one step on the chart.

Jim suffers exposure to radiation when investigating a downed experimental craft with a cracked reactor shield. This exposure is 50 rems per day; over the next two days, Jim is exposed to 100 rems, and suffers damage to his Endurance if he fails his Simple Constitution test. On the third day, he gets another 50 from the core, and a nuclear explosion goes off 100 miles away from Jim's investigation site. He is as a result exposed to 350 additional rems, making a total of 500 rems. If he fails his Constitution test he gets the full damage from 500 rems, but if he makes it, he only receives the total of 150-450 level.

SOURCES OF RADIATION

Source	Rems received
Nuclear power plant accident (at source)	2,000 + 2,000 per hour
Nuclear power plant accident (6 mile radius)	350 per year
Unshielded power plant core	500 per hour
Dirty bomb (0.3 mile radius)	140 per year
Fallout cloud (large nuclear explosion)	1,000 per hour
Fallout cloud (two days later)	10 per hour
Unshielded spaceship core	50 per day
Contaminated crash site	500 per day

Shielding, such as radiation suits or walls reduces exposure by a certain amount per hour, depending upon its effectiveness. For example, the radiation suits mentioned in **Chapter Three: Ops Center** (p. 140) protect against exposures up to 2,000 rems per hour. In addition, it should be noted that most of the radiation from a source such as a nuclear or dirty bomb explosion comes from fallout, which can be protected against by staying inside heavy shelter (at least a foot of solid concrete or stone, or several inches of lead). Radiation suits are also useful for moving about in fallout-afflicted areas.

Recovering Constitution Loss

Most Constitution loss from radiation poisoning is temporary, and can be recovered after exposure has ended with medical care and time. For each week spent under a doctor's care, away from the radiation source, make a Simple Constitution Test (using the modified level); a success restores a single lost level. Only one level per week can be restored in this manner; exposure to radiation is nasty, and it takes time and care to fully recover. Even still, there may be long-term effects such as cancer or body mutations; these are left to the Chronicler's discretion. Alien tech, such as nanotechnology, may allow Constitution recovery as quickly as one level per day.

OTHER SOURCES OF DAMAGE

Close and ranged combat, poisons, and illness are not the only ways that a character can be hurt. Some other sources of damage are described briefly below.

Drowning and Suffocation: Without preparation, a human being can hold his breath for 1.5 minutes (2.5 minutes if the character has time to take a couple of deep breaths first) plus D10(5) x Constitution seconds. After that, the person passes out and dies in a couple of minutes. Strangling cuts off a character's air supply and inflicts damage directly to the victim's throat and windpipe. Manual strangulation causes one point of damage per two levels of Strength (rounded down). A strangling rope inflicts one point of damage per Strength level; a wire garrote causes D4(2) x (Strength – 1) slashing damage (damage is tripled).

Falls: A falling character takes D6(3) points of damage for every yard fallen, to a maximum of D6(3) x 50. Note that a few people have survived falls from great heights. The damage is usually bruises and broken bones.

Fire: Being exposed to fire inflicts D4(2) points of damage per Turn. Being engulfed in fire does D6(3) points of damage every Turn. A character who suffers more than one fifth of his Life Points in fire damage has experienced severe second-degree burns or one third-degree burn. One who suffers more than one half of his Life Points in fire damage has second- and third-degree burns over a large area of his body; this may cause permanent or crippling injuries.

ARMOR

Heavy cloth, leather, wood, metal, ceramics, and plastic have all been used at one time or another to turn spear points or bullets, to cushion blows, and, people hoped, to render the wearer immune to harm. Few people in the modern era, with the exception of police officers and some criminals, own or wear any sort of armor. But armor can be found.

The protection of any suit has an Armor Value. Armor Values are expressed much as damage effects are, with a variable number (typically a die roll), a multiplier, and a flat value added to the roll. This represents the fact that no suit of armor offers the exact same protection over every inch of the body. When a character is struck, roll the base die times the multiplier, add the flat value, and subtract the result from the number of damage points inflicted. If the armor result is greater than or equal to the damage result, the character suffers no injury.

Specific armors are discussed in **Chapter Three: Ops Center** (see pp. 142-144).

ARMOR TYPES AND LAYERING

Characters may wear different types of armor over different parts of the body (a helmet and a light Kevlar suit, for example). If the optional Targeting Specific Body Parts rules (see p. 172) are used, use the Armor Value that applies to that specific area.

Modern armor is not meant to be layered; wearing a Kevlar vest over another Kevlar vest is extremely uncomfortable, and only possible when the lightest form of Kevlar is used. It is also not as effective as it would appear at first glance. In general, when layering armor, add the average value of the weakest armor, halved, to the Armor Value of the heavier layer, and increase Encumbrance by one step (i.e., none becomes light, light becomes medium, etc.).

One of the problems with wearing armor is that it slows a character down and makes some things (such as being quiet, or reacting quickly to danger) difficult. These problems are measured by the Encumbrance Value of armor. Encumbrance Values are explained in **Chapter Three: Ops Center** (see p. 115).

BARRIERS

All objects (doors, bottles, cars, tanks) have a Damage Capacity, an Armor Value, and a Barrier Value. The Damage Capacity is how many points of damage it takes either to destroy them or simply to render them useless. The Damage Capacity of an object essentially fulfills the same role that Life Points do for living beings. Armor Value is how much damage can be absorbed by the object without taking any damage. Barrier Value indicates how much protection an object affords to someone hiding behind it. In effect, the Barrier Value acts as "armor" that an attack must punch through in order to hurt whatever is behind those objects.

Note that Damage Capacity and Barrier Value are two different things. It takes more damage to totally destroy a door than to fire a bullet through it (and injure whoever is behind it), for example. For the most part, the Damage Capacity measures how much it takes to make the object stop functioning, or to blast a large hole (a yard radius opening in a wall) in it.

Generally, the Chronicler should worry about the Damage Capacity of objects only when the story absolutely demands it. If people want to smash a plate glass window, they should simply do it without rolling damage. On the other hand, if a characters uses an axe to break down a door before the fire raging behind him consumes the house he is trapped in, a few rolls to see how long it takes him to escape can heighten the tension.

Edge is a cop with Strength 4, attempting to kick open a door, just like on TV. His kick damage is D4 x 5(10). He makes an attack Task (with a +5 bonus, since the door is not exactly dodging away) and gets a +2 bonus to damage (five Success Levels). Edge's player rolls a three, raised to five because of the bonus, for a total of 25 points. The door lock has an Armor Value 6 and Damage Capacity 15, so it is broken, and the door swings open. If he had kicked a reinforced lock (AV 20, DC 30), not only would he not have broken the door, the Chronicler would have been well within his rights to have Edge take the damage he inflicted – promptly breaking every bone in his foot!

If a crazed Infused inside sees Edge through the peephole, he might decide to shoot at him through the door! The corrupted psycho fires a .44 magnum at point-blank range (only the door and some two yards of air stand between him and Edge). Total damage rolled is near maximum – 30 points. The door has a Barrier Value of 12, so 18 points go through. Edge (who was not wearing body armor) takes a total of 36 points (bullet damage doubles); he drops to the ground, unconscious but still alive. If the door had not been in the way, he would have taken a total of 60 points (30 points doubled), and he'd probably be history. Of course, if the psycho had tried to shoot through one inch of steel (Barrier Value 80), his shot would have bounced off, with a decent chance of ricocheting right back at him!

ARMOR VALUE AND DAMAGE CAPACITY OF COMMON OBJECTS

Object	Armor Value	Damage Capacity	Barrier Value
Wine Glass	0	1	0
Glass Bottle	1	5	0
Window	1	3–5	1
Dresser	3	5–10	6
Desk	5	30	6
Personal Computer	4	10–20	5
Door	5	30	10–12
Door Lock	6–8	10–20	–
Reinforced Door	10–15	40–60	20–30
Reinforced Lock	20–25	30–50	–
Wood Wall	5 + 1 per inch	20 per inch	8 + 1 per inch
Brick Wall	9 + 1 per inch	30 per inch	12 + 2 per inch
Concrete Wall	18 + 2 per inch	50 per inch	20 + 5 per inch
Ferroconcrete Wall	20 + 5 per inch	75 per inch	50 + 10 per inch
Steel Wall	30 + 5 per inch	100 per inch	60 + 20 per inch

INJURY

Damage in the **Unisystem** is measured in Life Points, representing the character's vitality and toughness. As Life Points are depleted, the ability of the character to continue moving and performing actions is impaired. If they are reduced to below zero, the victim is incapacitated and in danger of dying.

THE EFFECTS OF INJURY

During combat or other tense situations, adrenaline keeps all but the most serious wounds from affecting the character's performance.

A character reduced to fewer than five Life Points is severely hurt. It will be difficult to do anything unless the character is driven by adrenaline into pushing himself. Most actions suffer a –1 (if at five Life Points) to –5 (if at one Life Point) penalty due to pain and shock.

At zero points or below, the character is knocked down, stunned, and semiconscious. A Consciousness Test is necessary for the character to act normally (though they should move tenderly). When injured to –10 points or worse, the character may die (see Survival Tests, p. 179).

KNOCKING PEOPLE OUT

Hitting people over the head or punching them in the face to knock them out or stun them is never as easy as it appears in the movies. Hitting people on the head is as likely to kill them as knock them out – loss of consciousness is often a sign of a severe, life-threatening injury. A punch on the jaw may knock somebody out, or may just break the person's jaw (and, incidentally, the knuckles of the person doing the punching).

Some Chroniclers may apply "cinematic" rules to their games, however, allowing characters to engage in non-lethal brawls and attempts to capture people without harming them (or, by the same token, allowing the Chronicler's minions to capture Cast Members without inflicting permanent damage). The following optional rule can be used for this purpose.

If the player announces his Cast Member is making a non-lethal attack, and is using a blunt instrument, any damage inflicted is applied to the Endurance Points of the victim, instead of his Life Points. This allows characters to be punched repeatedly, pass out, and be fine in a few hours. If the Chronicler wants to make a minimal concession to reality, he may rule that every four points of Endurance damage inflicted in this manner imposes one Life Point of actual injury. Thus, a character who is knocked out will still nurse some bruises and cracked ribs after the fight.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND SURVIVAL TESTS

When a character is reduced to zero or fewer Life Points, he must make a Consciousness Test to continue to act normally (otherwise, he is incapacitated). Consciousness Tests are a special form of Attribute Test, using Willpower and Constitution, at a penalty of –1 for every Life Point below zero the character currently suffers. Consciousness Tests are repeated if the character is injured, or if forced to make a Survival Test.

When a character has been reduced to –10 Life Points, he may be killed instantly. To see if this happens, the character makes a Survival Test. Survival Tests also use Willpower and Constitution, with a penalty of –1 for every 10 Life Points below zero (rounded down) the character currently suffers.

The Survival Test determines only whether the character drops dead right then and there. Passing the Test does not mean the character is out of the woods. Unless medical attention is available, the character may still die in a few minutes. Every minute that passes without receiving medical help, a new Survival Test is required, at a cumulative –1 penalty.

Characters with First Aid or medical skills can stabilize the victim with a successful Task. Characters without First Aid or other medical skills can try to help by bandaging any visible wounds. Whether this works under the circumstances is left entirely up to the Chronicler.

Milo is hit by a burst of submachine gunfire. After all damage is accounted for, he has –24 Life Points. He has Constitution 5 and Willpower 3, for a base Survival Test score of eight. This is reduced by –2 because he is more than 20 points below zero, to a total of six. Milo must roll a three or higher on a D10 to stay alive. He rolls a six (for a total result of 12) and survives.

To stay conscious, Milo needs to make a similar Test, but at a –24 penalty! Not surprisingly, he fails and collapses, unconscious. Every minute after that, he needs to roll his Survival Test again, first at a –3 penalty (the original –2 plus an additional –1), then at –4, and so on, until he finally dies or receives medical help.

RECUPERATION

Regaining Consciousness

Characters may be knocked unconscious when their Life or Endurance Points are depleted through injury, fatigue, or disease. Generally, the character remains unconscious until the depleted pool is restored above zero through healing, rest, or regeneration. If the storyline requires it, the Chronicler may allow unconscious characters to become semiconscious or awake but unable to do anything more strenuous than speaking for brief periods of time.

Resuscitation

Even if the character is dying, modern medicine or psychic abilities may be used to bring the victim back from the threshold of death. Once again, common sense is the rule. A multiple gunshot victim might survive if no major brain damage was inflicted, but somebody who was decapitated or burned to a crisp in a explosion is not likely to benefit from any help in this world.

A character who fails a Survival Test can be brought back to life if extensive medical help (such as that available in a modern emergency room) is made available within (Constitution x 2) minutes. If paramedics are available, this length of time may be extended by an additional minute for each Success Level the paramedic gets on a First Aid Task.

The medical team in the hospital will try to revive the patient (anybody who has watched the TV show *ER* knows the drill). The doctor in charge performs a Medicine Task (typical doctors in an emergency room have a Medicine 4 and Intelligence 3). Each Success Level gives the patient a +1 bonus on a new Survival Test. The advanced life-saving techniques of the hospital add an additional +3 bonus. The recently dead character must now pass a new Survival Test, at a penalty of –1 for every five points he is below zero, plus all the bonuses described above. If he passes the Test, he lives.

Regaining Life Points

The human body can recover from an amazing amount of damage, but, movie and fiction claims to the contrary, people who are shot or stabbed cannot just get up and keep moving – not without risking death. Also, a few bandages and blood transfusions cannot restore somebody to full health immediately. The Chronicler can modify the guidelines below to make his world as Hollywood or realistic as he likes, of course. The default rules, however, assume that being injured is a significant problem. Avoiding injury is much safer than betting a character's Life Points against the tender mercies of weaponry.

Without medical care, a character risks complications such as infection and blood loss. He must pass a Survival Test every day to recover one Life Point per level of success (to a maximum of one Life Point per Constitution Level). If he fails the Test, he loses one Life Point instead!

Medical Healing

A Intelligence and First Aid Task restores one Life Point per Success Level obtained. Performing First Aid on oneself is possible, but with a –2 modifier. One Task is allowed for each wound inflicted. This requires players to keep track of how many wounds their characters suffered in addition to Life Point depletion. If the bookkeeping slows the game down, ditch it, and just allow one First Aid Task per combat.

A character recovers one Life Point per Constitution level per day of rest under medical care until he reaches zero points or higher. After that point, he regains a fixed two Life Points per day.

Milo with Constitution 5 and 46 Life Points normally has been reduced to –24 after a combat, but stabilizes. He recovers five points per day in a hospital until reaching zero Life Points (this would take five days of intensive care). Then he would have to spend another 23 days in bed to recover fully. In total, this is almost a month of bed rest (and that only because he has such a high Constitution; a normal person reduced to –24 points, provided he survived at all, would spend well over a month in the hospital). If he decides to leave the hospital early, he still risks complications, ripping stitches, opening wounds (use nonmedical care healing rules).

ENDURANCE POINT LOSS

Endurance Points measure a character's ability to resist fatigue after extended exertions. Hard work, such as actively avoiding NDD patrols for long periods of time, drains one Endurance Point every ten minutes. Very hard labor (running at top speed while encumbered) drains D4(2) Endurance Points per minute. Bursts of frenzied activity, such as close combat, drain Endurance at a higher rate, burning as much as D4(2) points in one Turn.

ENDURANCE LOSS TABLE

Hard Work	1 per 10 minutes
Very Hard Work	D4(2) per minutes
Frenzied Activity	D4(2) per Turn

Endurance "damage" may also occur due to "non-lethal" attacks (see Knocking People Out, p. 178).

Characters must have at least seven hours of sleep in a 24-hour period. Anything less and they lose one Endurance Point per hour of missed sleep. For example, if the character regularly sleeps five hours a night, he will lose two points each day – points that require some extra sleep to regain. Further, for each hour past 24 that a character stays awake, one more Endurance Point is lost. So, a character who stays awake for 36 straight hours loses 19 Endurance Points (seven for the lost night's sleep and 12 for the hours beyond 24).

ENCUMBRANCE

Carrying large amounts of equipment and armor not only tires the character out, reducing his Endurance, but also hinders his movement. **Chapter Three: Ops Center** discusses Endurance Value and penalties for carrying heavy or bulky items (see p. 115).

EFFECTS OF ENDURANCE LOSS

At five Endurance Points or fewer, the character feels groggy and dizzy. All actions incur a –2 penalty. If a character's Endurance is reduced to zero or below for any reason, he is in danger of falling unconscious. A Consciousness Test is necessary to remain on his feet, at a –1 penalty for every five points below zero (round up). This Test is repeated every Turn – eventually, the character will fall unconscious.

REGAINING ENDURANCE

Characters recover one Endurance Point per Constitution level per half hour of sleep, or the same amount for every hour of rest. Endurance Points lost due to lack of sleep can only be regained by sleeping.

ESSENCE POOL LOSS

Shock, terror, and some paranormal abilities may release Essence points from Cast Members. This can cause real problems.

For those who want to roleplay the mental exhaustion caused by the stress of combat, another drain on Essence may be employed. In stressful noncombat situations, such as hiding out in the woods as the Reticulan probe psibot searches for them, Pre-Heroic and Heroic characters lose D4(2) Essence points an hour, and no Essence is regained during that time. Talented characters suffer the same loss but regain their Willpower in Essence per hour, offsetting that loss. In a combat situation, two Essence points are lost per Turn for ranged combat, and three points per Turn for close combat.

EFFECTS OF ESSENCE LOSS

A character reduced to half his Essence Pool feels numb, and it may be hard to elicit any strong emotional reactions from him. Mental Tasks are performed at a –1 penalty until the Essence Pool is restored to half capacity.

At one or zero Essence, the victim falls into a deep depression. All Tasks and Tests suffer a –3 penalty, and it is difficult to concentrate or care about anything. If Essence is reduced below zero, the victim must pass a Difficult Willpower Test, applying a –1 penalty for every five Essence Points below zero (round up). If he fails, he temporarily loses one level in one mental Attribute (the Chronicler may allow the player to choose), or temporarily gains a Mental Drawback worth at least two points. These effects are usually lost when the Essence Pool returns to positive figures, although Chroniclers may decide otherwise in certain circumstances.

If Essence is reduced below –30, the character must pass a Survival Test, with a –1 penalty for every ten points below –30. Characters killed by Essence drain have no apparent cause of death. Medical science diagnose only "heart failure."

REGAINING ESSENCE POINTS

Characters regain one Essence point for each Willpower level, every hour.

VEHICLE RULES

Vehicle combat (i.e., any combat where one or more vehicles are involved) is handled as normal combat, with a few modifications. As with all rules, use them only when necessary.

VEHICLE ATTRIBUTES

Vehicles have a number of Attributes — comparable to a character's Attributes — that determine its capabilities. Most of the time, they are used only in combat or other action-oriented events (the ubiquitous car chase, for example). Worrying about Handling during a routine trip to work is mostly a waste of time.

Weight: The average unloaded weight in pounds.

Speed: In miles per hour, this Attribute is divided into maximum speed and average cruising speed. Halve Speed to determine yards per second.

Acceleration: This is how many miles per hour the vehicle can increase its speed per Turn. All vehicles can safely brake 30 mph per Turn. More serious braking requires a Task with a modifier of –1 per five mph of braking over the safe maximum.

Range: How many miles a vehicle may travel is a function of how many miles per gallon it gets and how much fuel it can carry. For aircraft, effective range is often half its maximum range, with half the range being the "point of no return." At that point, the aircraft does not have enough fuel to return to base (assuming it needs to return to its point of origin, of course). Range can vary enormously from those averages, though. Aircraft in particular can burn a lot of fuel performing complex acrobatics or traveling at maximum speed.

Toughness: This is a general measure of the vehicle's ruggedness, redundant systems, and damage control systems. It determines how long a vehicle can continue to function even after being heavily damaged. Most vehicles are relatively delicate machines; break enough parts and they'll stop working. Others, such as high-tech tanks, can survive a great deal of punishment. This attribute is roughly equivalent to a living being's Constitution Attribute. Toughness is rated from one to six, with extraordinary vehicles having higher values.

Handling: This is a measure of the vehicle's maneuverability and responsiveness to the driver/pilot — within the vehicle's capabilities, of course. A tank, no matter how good its Handling, is not going to be able to maneuver in close quarters as well as even the clumsiest motorcycle. Handling is comparable to a living being's Dexterity. For some Driving and Piloting Tasks, Handling replaces or modifies the pilot's Dexterity.

Damage Capacity (DC): This is a rough estimate of how much damage a vehicle can take before it is destroyed or inoperable. Obviously, damage to a critical component disables a vehicle long before its Damage Capacity is depleted. For general purposes, most civilian vehicles have DC 30 plus three for every 500 pounds of weight, rounded down. Military vehicles have a base Damage Capacity of 50 plus five for every 500 pounds of weight. So, a 2,000-pound car would have a Damage Capacity of 42 points, and a 30-ton tank would have a Damage Capacity of 650. Some large components such as turrets, wings, and the like have their own Damage Capacity, typically ranging from 20% to 100% of the DC of the main body. Generally, damage modifiers (such as slashing or stabbing damage, or modifiers for bullet type) do not apply to vehicles, which take only the basic damage rolled or generated.

If a vehicle powered by an internal combustion engine is heavily damaged or destroyed, there is a chance it may explode. Explosions are rare in real life; cars are designed not to explode. When a vehicle is reduced to 10% or less of its Damage Capacity, make a Simple Toughness Test with a +3 bonus. On a failure, the vehicle explodes. An exploding vehicle generates the following damage: Ground Zero (3 yards): D8 x 10(40), General Effect (8 yards): D8 x 8(32), Maximum Range (15 yards): D8 x 4(16).

Armor Value (AV): Almost all vehicles are somewhat harder to hurt than normal people. The metal, wood, or plastic of their hulls is strong enough to deflect some attacks, and, in the case of armored vehicles, armor plating is added for increased protection. Most cars have an Armor Value of two to 10, depending on how sturdy their hulls are. Cars can be made "bulletproof" by adding layers of Kevlar and other materials to their construction.

Accuracy: This Attribute applies only to vehicles with weapon systems and measures such things as radar, laser, and other range-finding and targeting systems. Accuracy sometimes replaces or modifies Dexterity when firing vehicle-mounted weapons. Many simple weapon systems have no specific sights or aiming mechanisms; in those cases, the character uses Dexterity and weapon skill, often with a penalty.

Crew: The number of crew needed to drive the vehicle, followed by the number of passengers it can normally carry.

Cargo: For some vehicles, a separate entry indicates its cargo capacity in pounds.

VEHICLES IN ACTION

Most of the time, using a vehicle involves no Tasks or Tests. The character, provided he has the appropriate Driving or Piloting skill, gets in and goes wherever he wants. During stressful moments (pursuing an enemy, realizing that the car's brakes have been cut), Dexterity and Driving/Piloting Tasks are needed. For the most part, this should be dictated by the Chronicler as the individual situation demands, but some possibilities are discussed below.

Driving at High Speed: Speed kills, as the saying goes. Traveling at very high speeds on a lone, straight stretch of highway is no problem. Problems occur only when the character has to do something besides go in a straight line. Maneuvering at speeds over 50 mph requires a Dexterity and Driving Task (if the character's Dexterity exceeds the Handling rating of the vehicle, use the Handling rating instead). Potential modifiers include –1 per 10 miles an hour over 50; –2 for attempting to swerve or taking a sharp curve; –1 to –3 for sudden attempts to maneuver (avoiding a deer jumping right in front of a car would incur a –3 penalty). Fast Reaction Time gives characters a +2 bonus to these maneuvers. The results of failure can range from a partial spin to rolling the car over, crashing against an obstacle, or worse, depending on the circumstances.

Chases: These work largely as normal foot chases (see p. 156). Make Resisted Dexterity and Driving/Piloting Tasks (if the character's Dexterity exceeds the Handling rating of the vehicle, use the Handling rating instead). The first person/vehicle to start moving gains a +1 to the Task. The faster vehicle receives a +1 bonus for every five mph it is moving above the other vehicle's speed. If going at very high speeds, both sides should also need to succeed at a Driving/Piloting Task using the high speed modifiers above, to ensure nothing happened to them during the chase. A chase should last at least a minute or two. To make things dramatic, the Chronicler can dictate that the pursuer needs to accumulate a number of Success Levels above the pursued's Success Levels, with Tasks being rolled every minute of the chase. The Chronicler should describe the chase, and, if it is taking place on a crowded highway or city streets, should throw in a number of complications (pedestrians, other cars, highway patrolmen) to spice things up.

Collisions: When a vehicle hits something, it does damage to both the target and itself. Base damage is equal to D10 times a factor equal to the vehicle's weight (in tons) and one-tenth the vehicle's speed (or the differential in speeds if a vehicle hits a moving object) in miles per hour, rounding up. For example, a two-ton truck going at 50 mph inflicts D10 x 7 (two for the weight plus five for the speed) points of damage. If the vehicle is very large, such as a sailing vessel, damage uses only the speed of the vehicle, not its weight, for the multiplier.

If the target is far lighter than the vehicle (car versus pedestrian), the vehicle suffers only a third of the damage rolled. If the target is somewhat smaller (truck versus car), the heavier vehicle takes half damage. If the impact is against a much heavier object (a tank or a concrete wall), the vehicle takes (D10 + 2) x (Speed/10). All collision damage is reduced by the Armor Value of the vehicle before being applied to its Damage Capacity.

Passengers inside a vehicle involved in a collision take half damage if not wearing seat belts and one-fifth damage if they are. Air bags provide an additional AV 20 against the collision damage, except for small children and small people, who may take an additional D6 x 2 points of damage from the air bag itself.

Malfunctioning Vehicles: If the vehicle is damaged somehow, has been sabotaged, or suffers some dangerous or catastrophic malfunction (loses its brakes, loses all four aircraft engines, and so on), a Dexterity and Driving/Piloting roll is needed to try to stop or bring down the vehicle before any mishaps happen. Modifiers range from –1 (one flat tire) to –6 (all engines are off-line in an aircraft). In some cases, a severe malfunction is not an issue – a malfunctioning car can be stopped fairly easily, unless it was going very fast (in which case, apply the high speed modifiers).

VEHICLE COMBAT

Most vehicle combat (with the rare exception of ramming attacks) involves ranged weapons. These attacks range from people with guns firing from the inside of a vehicle to complex weapon systems such as missiles or laser-aimed cannon.

Shooting from Vehicle: Firing from a moving platform with hand weapons has a base penalty of –3, with another –2 if the vehicle is moving faster than 30 mph.

Using Vehicle-Mounted Weapons: Unstabilized vehicle weaponry suffers penalties as above, with the additional complication that the gunner's Dexterity and weapon skill total cannot exceed the weapon's or vehicle's Accuracy rating. For vehicles with stabilized weapon systems (most modern military vehicles), firing penalties are limited to –2 if the vehicle is moving over 30 mph.

Missiles: Missiles have on-board guidance systems that direct them to a target. A gunner must succeed at a Dexterity and Guns Task to fire them, but whether they strike the target depends on the roll of a D10, plus the weapons Accuracy, plus the Success Levels of any aiming Task conducted before firing.

Dodging: Most military vehicles cannot dodge attacks; they are too big and too slow. Lighter vehicles such as motorcycles and car-sized targets may attempt to drive fast enough to avoid an attack. This is treated as a Resisted Task, with the target's Dexterity and Driving/Piloting skill versus the attacker's Dexterity and weapon skill, or Accuracy, depending on the weapon. Vehicles that employ countermeasures against missiles gain a dodge Task.

AIR COMBAT

Air combat is a highly complex set of maneuvers, where the ability to see or sense the target is as important as the ability to destroy it. To reflect air combat accurately would require so many rules as to make a game very difficult to play (unless it is a computer game, where most of the calculations are made by the machine). Described below are a few cinematic rules for fast and furious air combat.

Dogfighting: This type of combat was a lot more common in the days before guided missiles, when pilots aimed at their enemies through their gun sights. Dogfighting combat is a Resisted Task, using the Dexterity and Piloting skills of the two combatants. If one aircraft has a higher Handling rating than the other, add the difference between the two to the more maneuverable vessel. Situational Awareness adds +2 to the Task; Fast Reaction Time adds +1. The winner manages to get on the target's "six" (six o'clock, right behind it) and can shoot it.

Playing Chicken: This occurs when two aircraft fly at each other, firing and seeing who turns away (or is destroyed) first. The two aircraft can fire at each other for one or two Turns, depending on their speeds and weapon ranges. If neither ship is destroyed, the two characters engage in a Resisted Willpower Test; Nerves of Steel bonuses apply. The loser turns away, and the winner can now engage the other with impunity for one Turn.

UNDERWATER COMBAT

In the world of *Conspiracy X*, unidentified submersible objects (USOs) can be encountered just as often as UFOs. For vehicular combat underwater, the rules for chases and dogfights can be used as normal, as well as standard vehicle-mounted weapons. Most firearms are useless underwater, however. Explosive weaponry, due to the shock waves and pressure from the blast, doubles all effect radius ranges and doubles the damage sustained.

If characters engage in underwater combat outside of a vehicle, some modifiers must be taken into account. All combat actions are at a –2 penalty, including dodge and defense actions. An additional –1 penalty is applied to actions and Perception Tasks if the character is not wearing a mask or goggles. Melee damage is reduced due to the cushioning effect of the water, halving the effective Strength of the attacker. This cushioning effect renders thrown weapons useless.

Pressure is dangerous to characters outside of vehicles if they are too deep. For every minute an agent is 60 feet underwater or more, he must pass a Simple Constitution Test. For every additional 30 feet of depth, a –1 penalty is applied. Failing this Test imposes D6(3) points of damage.

ZERO-G COMBAT

As the alien threat increases, humans may take the fight offplanet. In space, moving is difficult. Some form of propellant, even if just pushing off from an object, is needed. The agent continues moving in any direction he launches himself until he can propel himself otherwise, or he hits something.

If the agent fires a projectile weapon without being braced against an object, he spins a number of Turns equal to the multiplier of the damage. Being hit by the bullet does the same to a lesser extent (halve the multiplier). Throwing an object has a similar effect, using the Strength of the agent as the multiplier.

The agent is in the International Space Station and encounters a Saurian trying to sabotage a computer. He fires a pistol that does D6 x 4(12) damage. As he isn't braced to the side of the station, he spins backward due to the shot for four Turns. He hits and the Saurian spins away for two Turns.

Chroniclers who wish to use more detailed rules for microgravity movement may incorporate those presented in the *AFMBE* supplement *All Tomorrow's Zombies*.

SPACE VACUUM

Surviving a vacuum isn't like trying to breathe underwater. A character can't hold his breath, or his lungs will burst with the violent decompression, and water vapor quickly forms in his flesh, causing considerable bloat (unless held firmly within a spacesuit). His eyes bulge outward, and his heart is put under incredible stain due to changes in circulation.

A character can remain conscious in a vacuum for (Constitution + 1) Turns. If he is rescued within (Constitution + 1) x 30 seconds, he can be successfully resuscitated. Beyond that, nanotech is required for revival. If left to drift in space, the body rapidly loses temperature, and the brain freezes (allowing possible resurrection years or centuries later, in the Chronicler's discretion).

If the character has open wounds while exposed to vacuum, he sustains D10(5) points of damage per Turn due to blood loss.

EXPERIENCE

Character improvement is represented in the **Unisystem** by experience points. Experience points are awarded to each player at the end of every gaming session. The better the game and the player's performance were, the more points should be awarded. With these points, players can improve their Cast Members' Attributes, skills, and other features.

AWARDING EXPERIENCE

During or at the end of each roleplaying session, the Chronicler awards each player experience points. Some guidelines as to how many experience points should be awarded for a playing session are outlined. Average awards are two to six points per session.

Experience Point Awards List

Being There: All Cast Members who participated in the game session receive one point.

Good Roleplaying: One point per instance.

Advancing the Storyline While Remaining in Character: One to three points. This rewards players whose roleplaying, planning, and Cast Member actions helped develop the story.

Heroic Roleplaying: One to three points. Given to players whose Cast Members remained true to themselves even when it meant they would suffer for it. The heroic type who risks his life for others, and even the coward who runs or surrenders when the wise course would be to fight, are good examples of this.

Ingenuity Award: One to three points. Given to players who used impressive and unexpected tactics and problem-solving to deal with a plot device. This, however, applies only if the devious plan or tactics were true to the Cast Member (not the player). If the village idiot suddenly starts having spurts of Machiavellian brilliance for no good reason, no award should be given.

Improving Characters

Experience points work much like the character points used to create Cast Members. They can be spent to raise Attribute and skill levels, to acquire new Qualities, to reduce or eliminate Drawbacks (though not those gained through supernatural Corruption), and to increase paranormal powers. The cost of these improvements is different than the cost of acquiring them during character creation, however. After a Cast Member has been defined, it is a lot harder to advance in some areas. To determine how to improve characteristics, refer to the Character Improvement Table.

Improving Attributes

Unlike skills and powers, Attributes represent relatively fixed qualities of a Cast Member. As a result, Attributes may be improved no more than one level for humans. If the Attribute was five or less before improvement, the one-level increase costs five experience points. If the Attribute was six or greater before improvement, the one-level increase costs 10 points.

Reasons for Improvement

Having enough experience points to raise a characteristic is usually not enough. There must also be an explanation as to why the Cast Member improved in that area, and usually those reasons are determined in the course of the game. If the Cast Member used a skill or Attribute repeatedly in the previous few game sessions, it would make sense for that skill or Attribute to get better. To learn a brand-new skill, the Cast Member must have spent some time working on that skill before being allowed to spend the points to acquire it. To acquire a Quality, eliminate a Drawback, or gain new psychic powers, there must have been a series of events or circumstances that make it sensible for the characteristic to arise or disappear.

Saving Experience Points

The player does not have to spend all earned experience points right away. He can elect to save them for a later date, perhaps waiting to amass enough points to raise a specific, high-cost characteristic.

Character Improvement Table

Improvement	Point Cost
Attribute	See text
Existing Skill	The cost of the next level (*e.g.*, to go from level 3 to 4 costs 4 points)
Existing Special Skill	The cost of the next level + 1 (*e.g.*, to go from level 3 to 4 costs 5 points)
New Skill	6 points for level 1
New Specialty	6 points
New Special Skill	8 points for level 1
Quality	As per character creation
Remove Drawback	The original value of the Drawback
New Psychic Power	11 points grants level 1 in both Strength and Art
Psychic Power (Strength)	6 points per level until level 5, 10 points per level thereafter
Psychic Power (Art)	5 points per level until level 5, 8 points per level thereafter
Learn a New Ritual	8 points for level 1
Existing Ritual	As Special Skill

Downtime

Not all of a character's time is spent hunting down aliens and NDD agents, or recovering extraterrestrial technology. Most operatives have lives and duties outside of Aegis, and most of their time is spent there. In between the life-threatening and world-shaking operations undertaken by an Aegis cell, characters may participate in a number of Downtime activities.

After a mission is completed, the Chronicler should grant the players a number of weeks of Downtime, during which their characters may engage in any of the activities described below. Two weeks of Downtime is recommended for these purposes, although the actual interval between missions may in fact be much longer. The remainder of time is assumed to be taken up carrying out non-Aegis obligations. Each activity consumes at least a week of Downtime.

Convalescence: Even the most careful and well prepared teams run into situations that exceed their ability to handle them. All wars have casualties, and it is inevitable that the Cast Members will eventually run afoul of one of the myriad aliens, assassins, or supernatural entities they combat regularly. Providing the characters are not sent home in small boxes, chances are they will have some extensive recuperating to do. Whether this convalescence takes place within the Cell or in a hospital depends on the facilities available. Providing the characters are conscious, they may undergo therapy if necessary.

Extending Influence: Characters may attempt secret arrangements and deniable alliances with shadowy figures in darkened halls and service corridors across the nation. Through pacts made and information shared, these Aegis operatives secure further power and authority. Any character may elect, during Downtime, to attempt to expand his power base and increase his Influence Quality rating. This is done by spending experience points, although the player must state that he is using his Downtime to increase his Influence in this way. Players should remember that raising the Influence Quality usually requires increasing the character's Status, Resources, or Military Rank Qualities. Chroniclers may also allow Cast Members to extend their Influence by assigning an Extended Task (see p. 161) to increase their contacts. An Intelligence and Bureaucracy Task (or Smooth Talking, Intimidation, or other suitable skill, depending upon the circumstances) should be used. With sufficient Success Levels, a "breakthrough" should result in the agent gaining experience points that can be spent purely upon raising his Influence. Typically, four to six Success Levels would be needed to gain one to two experience points, though this may become more difficult as the agent's Influence grows.

Instruction and Training: Many characters elect to spend Downtime training and learning new skills. The character should have access to a training facility capable of providing the desired instruction, which rationalizes any experience points spent on gaining or increasing a certain skill. This also works for combat skills (with suitable ammunition and practice ranges) and martial arts (with a dojo and qualified instructor). With a proper instructor, extra experience points can be gained through use of the Instruction skill (see p. 106). These extra points can only be used to raise the skill being taught.

Research and Development: The success of Aegis' ongoing operations depends heavily on R&D work. Such work provides vital information regarding the aliens' strengths and weaknesses, analysis of weaponry and craft, and development of new weapons and countermeasures. Some cells are devoted solely to research and conduct little, if any, field work themselves. Although the players' cell will undoubtedly focus heavily on active investigation and hazardous missions, Downtime research will still play an important role in its operations.

The research and development possibilities available to the cell are limited only by the players' imaginations and the resources of the cell. Reverse-engineering and replicating alien technology, designing new weapons, analyzing extraterrestrial specimens for weaknesses to exploit, and devising new arcane rituals are all research areas routinely pursued by Aegis cells. Chroniclers will decide what information or developments are gained from such research and should be resolved as a research project (see p. 161).

Resource Accumulation: After several missions, the cell may find its resources slowly dwindling, as consumables such as ammo and medical supplies are used up and equipment taken into the field is lost or damaged. The cell may also decide at some point to expand its operations, build new facilities, and recruit more staff. It may even decide to create a child Cell and provide it with some extra resources. To accomplish all this, operatives may elect to spend their Downtime arranging to have new equipment and supplies discreetly shipped to the Cell or have new facilities built and the work orders lost.

A character that spends his Downtime accumulating may spend a number of Resource Points equal to his Influence Quality rating on cell resources. The same restrictions apply to the expenditure of RP as during cell creation (see p. 114).

Sometimes an agent wants something that is beyond his Resource Point gain in one Downtime session. The cell has two alternatives. Cell members may pool Resource Points of the same Influence Quality type. Otherwise, agents may hold RP until the next session of Downtime. In this case, however, one RP is lost from each agent's pool each week of non-Downtime unless a Willpower and Bureaucracy Task is passed.

Therapy: After years (often less) of fighting a covert war against a largely unseen menace from outer space and witnessing, even conducting, questionable experiments and arcane rituals, it is not uncommon to find Aegis operatives a trifle unhinged. Not surprisingly, instances of paranoia, aggression, and schizophrenia are common among Aegis veterans. A few weeks of Downtime spent in psychological therapy and treatment can prevent borderline individuals from becoming liabilities to their cell.

At the Chronicler's discretion, any Mental Drawback may be reduced or eliminated through proper treatment. The therapist and subject engage in Resisted Simple Willpower Tests. If the therapist is successful, the patient may spend the necessary experience points to remove or decrease the Mental Drawback.

Chap

ter Five Paranormal

While a great deal of an Aegis cell's time is spent investigating NDD activity and the alien threat, just as much time is dedicated to the paranormal occurrences that plague reality with increasing and more deadly frequency. This chapter introduces the Chronicler to many aspects of the paranormal; it is recommended for the Chronicler's eyes only.

This is merely an introduction. Information is provided to allow agents to become corrupted by the supernatural, face corrupted and mutated evil, investigate the strange and haunted areas of the world, and arm them with psychic abilities and powerful magical rituals. Chroniclers who wish to build on the information here should refer to *The Paranormal Sourcebook*, which provides complete rules for powerful psychics, dozens more arcane rituals, and a more detailed investigation into corruption and its terrifying effects.

PSYCHIC ABILITIES

In the past few decades, science has finally begun to confirm what philosophers have postulated for centuries – that human consciousness possesses the capacity to directly sense, affect, and interact with the physical world. Researchers have determined that the mind has the ability to sense and affect reality through an as yet unknown process. The phenomena surrounding this little understood faculty of the brain are referred to collectively as psi, and its study is parapsychology. The learned men and women of science who study psi are called parapsychologists.

Unclassified private research organizations have only recently begun to make real progress in understanding psi and psychic abilities. Government-sponsored secret research into psi phenomena, however, has produced some remarkable results. These projects, namely the CIA's MKULTRA and the former Soviet Project Rasputin, are now completely under Aegis control. Able to draw on the prodigious results of these two covert programs, in addition to the years of research conducted by Aegis operatives and their predecessors in the Watch, Aegis possesses significant knowledge of psychic phenomena.

Current research has found that somewhere between 95 to 99 percent of humans exhibit some degree of psychic ability. In fact, most people use ESP on an almost daily basis. Such ESP usually manifests itself in the form of hunches, intuition, and other essential elements of human cognition that are usually taken for granted. While such individuals are technically psychics simply by virtue of being capable of ESP, the term "psychic" is generally reserved for those individuals who exhibit greater control over psi.

BASIC EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION

Except for a minority of the population who are psychically damaged in some way (Voids, Psinks, and Psychic Burnouts), everyone is capable of using Basic ESP. This is reflected by the "free" Basic ESP Quality (see p. 65). There are five Basic ESP abilities: Hunch, Intuition, Ken, Read Aura, and Second Sight. Each ability requires a Difficult Willpower Test to use, or a Rhine Test.

For normal characters, failing a Basic ESP Test means that no insight, or even erroneous information, is gained. Furthermore, the character may not repeat that particular Test. This prevents the character from trying the same Test over and over simply by rephrasing the question.

Once a particular Basic ESP power has been used successfully, the character may not use that power for one week. The Chronicler has the final say when or if a player is using her Basic ESP too often or in unsuitable situations.

Jennifer is a regular agent investigating an abandoned warehouse. She tries to get a Hunch if there is anyone still in the building. She succeeds and gets the feeling that the place is still occupied by someone or something. As she has succeeded with a Hunch, she cannot try to get a Hunch for another week, although she can try any of the other four abilities as long as she does not try them immediately or in the same situation.

RHINE TESTS

A popular aspect of the original *Conspiracy X* was the Rhine Test. This uses the "real world" test for psychic abilities, named after parapsychologist Joseph Rhine. He conducted experiments in psychic phenomena and pioneered the use of Zener cards (named after their inventor, Karl Zener). In the real test, the experimenter takes the top card from a pack of 25 and tries to transmit the symbol mentally (one of five: circle, square, star, cross, and wave) to the subject, who tries to "read" what symbol is on the card. Probability gives the reader a 20% chance.

There are a couple of ways to use Zener cards to test the success of a character in the game. One is to have the Chronicler shuffle a deck made up of one of each Zener card and have the player pick one of the five symbols shown on the cards (star, wave, square, circle, cross). The Chronicler then draws a card. If the card drawn is the one that the player picked, the player's character has managed to use her psychic abilities successfully.

Chroniclers who wish to take this one step further can draw the card first and have the player try to read the Chronicler's thoughts to identify the symbol. This way, the character has as much psychic potential as the player!

To make the test even harder for the psychic among us, shuffle five of each Zener card into the deck before drawing. In truth, this is how Zener cards are used in psychic testing procedures.

For full psychic abilities (see p. 191), each ability has an Art rating. The Chronicler asks the player to guess a number of symbols equal to the Art rating (to a maximum of four). She then draws that same number of cards. Each time one of the chosen symbols is drawn, the character gains one Success Level. For those with Art levels above four, the 25-card Zener deck (five of each symbol) is recommended.

ZENER CARDS

Sample Zener cards may be found at the back of this book. Simply photocopy them and cut them out. Alternatively, packs of Zener cards are available over the Internet or in specialty stores that also sell Tarot decks.

Basic ESP Descriptions

Below is a list of the five Basic ESP abilities available to most agents.

Hunch: The character gains insight into her current situation, allowing her to ask one "yes or no" question about the present condition of objects, people, or events. Note that the information gained is only about the current location, status, or nature of an object, person, or event. The player may not ask questions about the future, past, or people's state of being. The following examples are all valid inquiries: "Is there a corpse in Suzanne's car?" "Is the guy we are following armed?" "Does the base mainframe still work?"

Intuition: A character's intuition gives an insight into a living subject's thoughts and next course of action. The player may ask one "yes or no" question about the state of mind of a particular individual, her next action, or her most probable reaction to a near-future event in vague terms. Near future is defined as within the next hour. The character must know the individual in the question at least casually. For example, the player could ask, "Will the gunman fire at me if I surrender?" or "Is the technician thinking about betraying us?", but not "Where is the gunman hiding?" (if rephrased as a "yes or no" question, Hunch might work for that query). This power does not work on Voids, Psinks, or the Infused.

Ken: This power allows the character to gain information about the past nature of an object or event. Every subject has a purpose and associated emotions – these are what Ken detects. For example, the player could ask, "Was this alien device created to harm?" or "Was that traffic accident in front of us really accidental?"

Read Aura: This ability allows the character to sense psychic and supernatural energies. Humans radiate energy, which vibrates at different frequencies and emits multicolored light visible only to psychics. Sample auras are described in the Aura Color Chart.

The player may ask one "yes or no" question about the feelings or status of a person. For example, "Is the scientist sane?" and "Is Michael alive?" are acceptable. The target must be within visual, auditory, or tactile range of the character using Basic ESP. Read Aura can also be used to sense ambient Seepage energies, revealing whether sufficient Seepage exists to fuel any given ritual.

Note that Voids, Psinks, the Infused, and nonhumans do not have auras as they do not radiate Seepage. When someone successfully attempts to read the aura of a target that has none, the Chronicler should simply state that no information can be gained.

Second Sight: Second Sight gives hints of what the future holds. Often this manifests itself as precognitive dreams or visions. The player may ask the Chronicler one "yes or no" question about a future event. The character might ask "Will the cell leader live through 'til tomorrow?", "Will the bomber strike again?", or "Is Jack going to be in Seattle next week?"

BASIC ESP CHART

Ability	Short Description
Hunch	One "yes or no" question about the present
Intuition	One "yes or no" question about a living subject's thoughts or near-future actions
Ken	One "yes or no" question about past nature of object or event
Read Aura	Insight into emotional and mental state of living subject
Second Sight	One "yes or no" question about the future

AURA COLOR CHART

Red: Strong emotional energy often related to stress, anger, hostility, and sexuality. Possibly linked to physical exertion.

Pink: Clear emotional energy tied to happiness and contentment.

Orange: Energy related to a change in the state of the body or mind.

Yellow: Strong thought-related energy tied to concentration and study.

Green: Harmonious, healing, helpful energy.

Blue: Thought-related energy tied to calm reflection and acceptance.

Indigo: Spiritual, strong psychic, purity of spirit energy.

Violet: Deep internal struggle, something very important held within.

Brown: Honest, straightforward, gentle energy.

Silver: Quick-thinking, agile energy.

Black: Malevolence or destructive energy, may be self-directed.

PSYCHICS

A select few are able to see into the minds of others, to catch glimpses of the past and future, and even to affect the world directly with no tools but their strength of will. Sometimes called "the Sight," since many such abilities involve sensing or seeing things beyond the scope of the five senses, some scientific research has been conducted into these powers. Scientists, of course, use more clinical names, such as anomalous cognition (remote viewing, clairvoyance, or ESP), anomalous perturbation (psychokinesis), and anomalous mental phenomena.

Psychic Powers

Each psychic power is a branch of the same tree. All the powers are related, and all psychics have the potential to develop all such abilities.

Each psychic ability has two elements: Strength and Art. The Strength of the ability represents the raw power the psychic has. The Art represents the degree of expertise a psychic has in using her abilities.

The higher the Strength of the power, the more far-reaching and impressive those abilities are. Each level of Strength costs three character points up to level five, and six points thereafter during character creation. After character creation, the cost rises to six and 10 points, respectively.

The Art of a power determines how skilled the psychic is at its manipulation. Most Tasks use the Art level of the power added to the appropriate Attribute (typically a mental Attribute). Each Art costs two points per level until level five, and five points per level thereafter during character creation. The cost is five and eight points, respectively, after character generation.

Most psychic powers have an effective "range" equal to line-of-sight.

Defense against Psychic Powers

Normal people can resist some controlling or manipulative psychic powers by using their Willpower. The effects of other powers such as telepathy can be felt with a Difficult Perception Test. Three Success Levels gives some indication about what is going on – for example, the impression that someone else is present in the target's mind when telepathy is being used. Fewer Success Levels simply reveal a buzzing feeling or some other indication that something is wrong. Regardless of success, normal humans cannot resist the use of such powers.

Essence and Psychics

Most psychics do not use Essence directly, but their powers have the side effect of strengthening their spiritual energy. A psychic's Essence Pool gains an additional point for every level of Strength and Art in any and all psychic powers she possesses. For example, a psychic with Clairvoyance Strength 4 and Art 3, and Telekinesis Strength 3 and Art 6 would add a total of 16 Essence Points to her Pool.

Psychic Powers List

The following list has the three most common psychic powers, their advantages and limitations, and some of the things a skilled user can do with them. Most of the powers also have Strength tables to determine the results of successful Tasks. A psychic of a higher Strength or Art level may choose to use the effects of a lower level.

Clairvoyance

Characters with clairvoyance can "see" things unimpeded by distance or barriers. Usually, these visions are triggered by intense emotions. The psychic often sees crimes being committed and other disturbing events and incidents.

Clairvoyance can also be used actively by the character. These effects allow the psychic to see through walls and containers. The ability is thus very useful for spies and investigators – provided they accept the terrible price for these powers.

Once the agent has developed a talent in clairvoyance, any attempts to use the Basic ESP Hunch are automatically successful (at the Chronicler's discretion).

Using Clairvoyance

All characters with clairvoyance are subject to random visions of danger and horror; many uses of clairvoyance are spontaneous and not under the control of the psychic. Chroniclers are advised to make a special note of any characters with this ability, as psychic flashes can play an important part in many *Conspiracy X* campaigns. Clairvoyance is a powerful Chronicler tool in guiding the characters. Visions may alert the Cast Members to possible threats and enemies, and, if interpreted correctly, may provide valuable clues and information. Random clairvoyance flashes are also a burden, as the character is often plagued by visions of vicious crimes and disasters. They occur as the character sees them, and often she can do nothing to prevent them.

Clairvoyance Tasks use Perception and Clairvoyance Art. Two types of activities are possible, visions and viewings.

Visions are flashes of insight about ongoing events controlled by the Chronicler. Often, the character sees through the eyes of a victim or perpetrator, or from a worm's- or bird's-eye view. Each vision works differently, but the point of view is often confusing, and most visions are short. Typically, the character receives multiple related visions, each adding a little more information to the overall puzzle. The range of the visions is irrelevant; if the Chronicler believes the character is in a position to be involved in the related events, the vision could be of events occurring halfway across the world.

Viewings are attempts to see past barriers or beyond the range of the normal sense of sight – looking inside a safe, or a place the character has never seen but knows about. The range of viewings is based on the Strength of the power.

Clairvoyance Strength Table

Strength	Abilities
1	Only brief glimpses of events are seen, equivalent to the blink of an eye. The range of a viewing is one yard per level of Perception plus Clairvoyance Strength.
3	A few seconds (one Turn) are seen. The viewing range is ten yards per level of Perception and Clairvoyance Strength.
6	A whole scene, lasting a few minutes, can be seen in a vision.
8	Viewing range is equal to 100 yards per level of Perception and Clairvoyance Strength.
10	Detailed, extended visions are possible. Viewing range is equal to one mile per level of Perception and Clairvoyance Strength.

Seeing the Past and the Future

Clairvoyance can be used only to see events that are happening now. To see events in other times requires a different psychic power called Cognition. Chroniclers who wish to allow Clairvoyant characters to see into the past (retro- or postcognition) or into the future (precognition) should use the Clairvoyance Strength Table as a guide to discern how far into the past or future the psychic can see. Any attempt to use the Basic ESP ability "Second Sight" should be considered automatically successful. This is purely at the Chronicler's discretion, however.

Using Clairvoyance Defensively

Characters with clairvoyance often receive flashes of nearby danger or threats – a sniper on a roof, a group of assassins waiting for the character to come out of a building, a speeding car just turning the corner. The Chronicler may warn the psychic of any such danger by requiring a Perception and Clairvoyance Art Task. Even if the Task is failed, the psychic should have the impression that something is going on (as the player does, having just been required to perform a Task).

TELEKINESIS

This is the power to move objects with the mind alone, sometimes called psychokinesis by psychic researchers. A highly skilled telekinetic can play the piano at a distance, or use a typewriter without having to touch it physically. The most powerful can toss cars around, crush objects and people with "invisible hands," and bring down houses.

Using Telekinesis

Moving an object in a relatively straight line uses Intelligence and the Telekinesis Art. The maximum weight that can be lifted and moved (slowly) is determined by the Strength of the power. In this case, the Strength of the power works as the Strength Attribute does (see pp. 34-35).

To determine the speed of the object being moved, subtract the Strength level needed to lift the object from the total Telekinesis Strength. Take the difference (rounded up) and multiply it by 10; that is the speed of the object in miles per hour. For example, a character with Telekinesis Strength 5 can lift up to 250 pounds. A ten-pound object requires less than a Strength 1, so the psychic can use her full Strength 5, multiplied by 10 – she can move the object up to 50 miles per hour. Using the same method, the psychic can levitate herself. If the character weighed 200 pounds (which requires Strength 4), she could fly (or rather, float) around at a speed of 10 miles per hour.

Tossing objects uses Dexterity and Telekinesis Art. Thrown objects can be dodged normally. Most small objects (hand-sized or smaller) inflict D4(2) x Telekinesis Strength points of damage. Long-distance throwing is subject to range penalties (use the ranges for light handguns; see p. 125).

Massive objects (which require a large Telekinesis Strength level to throw around) do D6(3) or more points of damage multiplied by the Telekinesis Strength minus the Strength needed to lift the object in the first place. That is because very heavy objects, which require a great deal of power simply to lift, do not fly as fast, inflicting less damage. See the Telekinesis Thrown Object Damage Table for the pre-multiplier damage inflicted by objects of a given weight, and the minimum Telekinesis Strength needed to lift them. If the character's Telekinesis Strength is equal to this number, she may lift and move the object around very slowly, but the object inflicts no damage when "tossed."

TELEKINESIS THROWN OBJECT DAMAGE TABLE

Object Weight	Base Damage	Minimum Telekinesis Strength
Less than 10 lbs	D4(2)	0
Up to 50 lbs	D4+1(3)	1
Up to 100 lbs	D6(3)	2
Up to 250 lbs	D8(4)	3-5
Up to 650 lbs	D10(5)	6-7
Up to 1,250 lbs	D12(6)	8-10
Above 1,250 lbs	D12+1(7)	11+

For heavier objects, determine the power level needed to lift the object and subtract it from the Telekinesis Strength used to find the multiplier for damage purposes.

Dropping objects is also possible. Falling objects do damage based on the minimum Strength needed to lift them plus falling damage. Calculate the Strength needed to lift the object, then add +1 to the multiplier based on the number of yards it falls toward its target. For example, a 200-pound object dropped from ten yards would inflict D8 x 14(56) points of damage. The multiplier comes from the Strength to lift the object (4) and the number of yards it falls (10), for a total of 14. Hitting the target is tricky, however. A stationary target can be hit with a Willpower and Telekinesis Art Task, but a moving target (any living being not restrained somehow is considered to be moving) is at –4 to be hit, and she can dodge (if she is aware of something dropping on her) with a +3 bonus.

The psychic can also toss invisible "punches" by projecting hard streams of telekinetic energy. These blows use the Telekinesis Art and Brawling to hit. Normal people cannot see the blows coming and cannot defend against them except by jumping around and hoping to make the psychic miss (their only defense becomes a Difficult Dexterity Test, and that is only if they realize what is happening). Psychic or Corrupted characters can see such attacks and can Dodge or defend normally. Telekinetic punches inflict one point of damage per Telekinesis Strength level.

It is possible to use Telekinesis to manipulate weapons and machinery at a distance, but it requires a high degree of concentration and proficiency. The Chronicler determines what skill is necessary. This works similarly to a Task, but instead of an Attribute and skill, the character uses the Telekinesis Art (replacing the normal Attribute) and a skill. Such uses have a penalty of –1 to –6, depending on how complex the Task is. Using a weapon, for example, would require the Telekinesis Art and the weapon skill, at a penalty of at least –2 (for a hand weapon such as a sword) to –4 (for a gun or similar firearm). Lock picking might have penalties of –4 to –5 if performed at a distance.

Alternatively, the psychic may want to use Telekinesis to supplement her own physical abilities. So, a character trying to lift something with her hands can add her Telekinesis Strength to her physical Strength. A character can similarly boost her physical Strength for combat purposes, including punches and hand-to-hand attacks.

Using Telekinesis Defensively

Telekinesis can be used to deflect physical attacks. A telekinetic "parry" uses the Dexterity and Telekinesis Art of the character and can deflect any attack the psychic can see (a thrown object can be seen, but bullets are too fast to be parried). Alternatively, the psychic can concentrate on projecting her telekinetic power around herself as a "bubble" that acts like invisible armor. This is a Intelligence and Telekinesis Art Task; each Success Level increases the duration of the field for one minute. The energy bubble has an Armor Value of D4(2) times one half of the Telekinesis Strength; it slows down and interferes with any physical attack. Keeping a Telekinesis shield active requires some concentration, although not as much as a full action. While it is up, any other actions the character attempts suffer a –1 penalty.

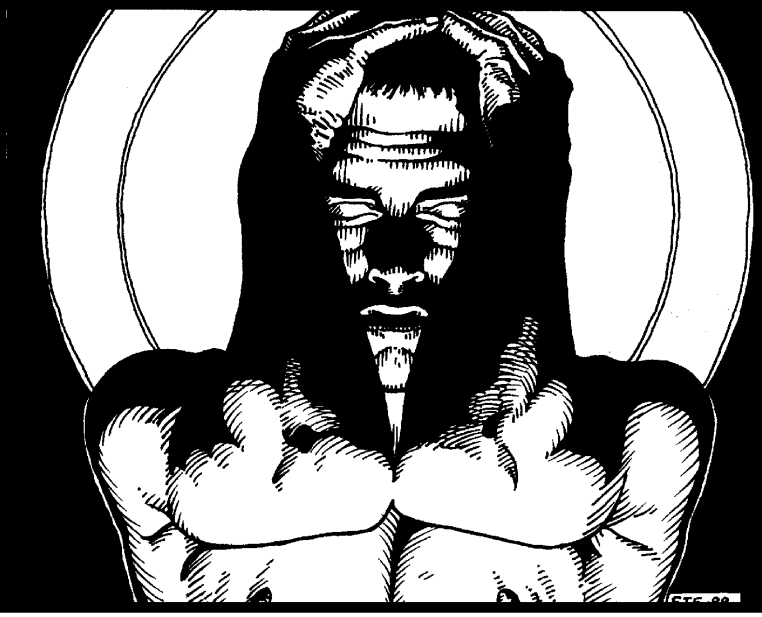
TELEPATHY

Psychics with this power can project their thoughts at others, causing them to be "heard" as words inside the targets' heads. Once contact has been established, the psychic can also hear any mental reply from her target (only thoughts deliberately "sent" to the psychic can be perceived; to delve into another person's thoughts requires a different power).

When an agent develops a talent with telepathy, any attempt to use the Basic ESP Intuition can be considered automatically successful (at the Chronicler's discretion).

Using Telepathy

Sending a mental message uses an Intelligence and Telepathy Art Task. The psychic can converse mentally with the target for one minute per Success Level. The range of this power is determined by the Strength level of the psychic.



MIND PROBING

Chroniclers without access to *The Paranormal Sourcebook* may wish to allow agents with telepathy to probe into the minds of their targets without the Mind Probe power. Victims can resist being probed with a Difficult Willpower Test. The higher the number of Success Levels the probing agent has, the more information the Chronicler may wish to reveal. This should be used sparingly, as delving into another's thoughts should be restricted to those trained in the difficult Mind Probe discipline.

At Strength 4 or higher, the psychic can use telepathy to send a deafening psychic "scream" that inflicts some damage and overloads the victim's mind. Psychic "screams" are treated as a Resisted Task, using the Willpower and Art of the psychic against a Difficult Willpower Test for normal people. Psychic characters and supernatural beings gain a +2 bonus to that Test.

This "scream" attack drains the psychic of one Essence point every time it is used. A successful attack inflicts D4(2) points of damage for every four levels of Telepathy Strength (rounded down). Further, the victim loses all of her actions for one Turn and suffers a penalty of –4 on all Tasks and Tests for one additional Turn per Success Level of the attack. The range of the scream is limited to two yards per Strength level.

Using Telepathy Defensively

Telepathy can be used to block any attempt to communicate with or probe the psychic's mind. The character erects a wall of "noise" around herself, disrupting any mental communications. When using Telepathy in this way, the psychic resists such powers (as Mind Probe). The psychic uses her Willpower and Telepathy Strength (not Art) in such Tasks. While the power is being used in this way, other uses of telepathy are impossible.

TELEPATHY STRENGTH TABLE

Strength	Abilities
1	Must touch a person to sense her thoughts; can see large concentrations of Seepage within ten yards.
2	Can reach the minds of others up to one yard for each level of Willpower plus Telepathy Strength.
3	Range increases to five yards for each level of Willpower plus Telepathy Strength.
5	Range increases to 50 yards for each level of Willpower plus Telepathy Strength. Line of sight is no longer necessary. The psychic can "scan" an area looking for a particular mind, as long as she has telepathically contacted that mind in the past.
6	Range increases to 100 yards for each level of Willpower plus Telepathy Strength.
10	Range increases to one mile for each level of Willpower plus Telepathy Strength.
15+	Range increases to 20 miles for each level of Willpower plus Telepathy Strength.

PSYCHICS AND SUPERNATURAL FOCI

One phenomenon had long puzzled parapsychologists. Certain individuals display normal psychic potential but seem unable to control or reliably manifest that potential. In and of itself this fact is unexceptional, as researchers had clearly determined that some people show a greater aptitude for psychic abilities than others. The puzzling aspect of these subjects was that they would occasionally demonstrate directed psychic ability far in excess of that of trained psychics.

These case studies remained a mystery until they were reviewed by researchers from one of CAPS' occult research programs. The occultists postulated that the subjects exhibiting random psychic power were in fact Supernatural Foci. Foci are individuals who have an unusual link to the psychic Seepage, the uncontrolled psychic energy that is radiated from each human and that is responsible for so-called "supernatural" phenomena. A Focus' link is thought to be genetic in nature, but this has yet to be proven.

Because Foci simply act as a catalyst for Seepage phenomena, they have no conscious control over its manifestation. They are essentially supernatural lightning rods. Some control can be attained through occult or religious ritual. Because the supernatural is actually an aspect of psi (not the other way around, as was so long supposed), many of the effects of those rituals closely parallel psychic abilities. Due to the inherent differences between psychic disciplines and Seepage energy, however, the results are sometimes drastically different. The various aspects of Supernatural Foci are covered in depth on p. 197.

VOIDS AND PSINKS

A great deal of variation exists in the level of psi ability and power demonstrated by individuals, ranging from the occasional hunch or precognitive dream, to lighting fires and reading minds. Nonetheless, some psychic faculty is measurable in almost all humans. A small percentage of the population, currently believed to be no more than five percent, exhibits little or no psychic ability. These people are called Psychic Voids (Voids). Even more puzzling, some of these Voids actually reduce the abilities of psychics near them. These wondrous individuals are referred to as Psychic Sinks (Psinks).

Both Voids and Psinks are difficult to read or affect with psychic abilities. When any psychic attempts to target a Void or Psink with any psychic discipline, the Strength and Art rating of the psychic are reduced by one. To illustrate, a telepathy (Strength 2, Art 3) who wishes to read the mind of a Void has an effective Strength 1 and Art 2. Any attempts to view the aura of a Void or Psink automatically fail, as neither Voids nor Psinks radiate Seepage.

In addition, the presence of a Psink drains psychic energy from anyone attempting to make use of those abilities. The radius of a Psink's power is equal to her Willpower in yards, although concentration can extend it to a degree. To increase the area affected by the psychic drain, the Psink must make a Difficult Willpower Test; her range is increased by the number of Success Levels in yards. The increased area of effect lasts as long as the Psink continues to concentrate.

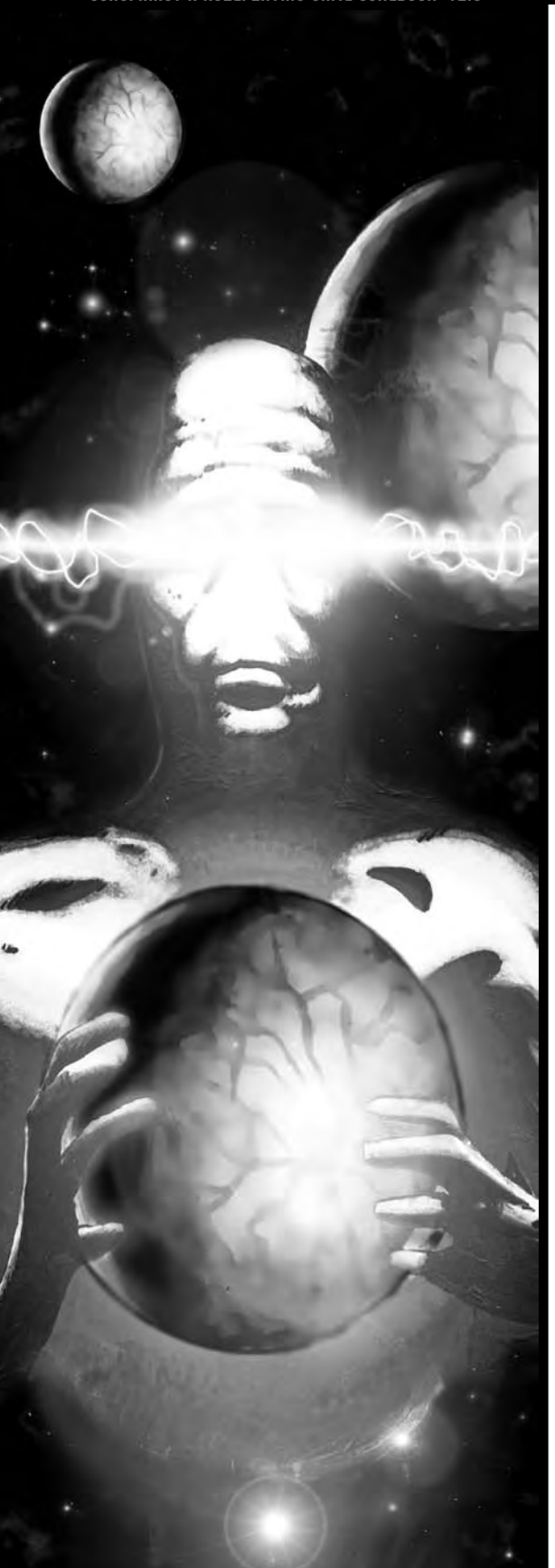
Any psychic who attempts to use a psychic power or Basic ESP ability while either the psychic or the psychic's target is within the effect radius of a Psink immediately loses one Endurance Point for each level of the Psink's Willpower. This is increased if the Psink has purchased the Psink Drawback multiple times. For example, if she has purchased the Drawback twice, any psychic using a discipline within the area would lose two Endurance Points for each level of the Psink's Willpower. The Endurance is lost as soon as the psychic makes the attempt to use her ability. A psychic may not abort the attempt in an effort to avoid losing the Endurance. Also, if a psychic is within the sphere of influence of more than one Psink the effects are cumulative, and the psychic loses Endurance equal to the combined Willpowers per Psink when using psychic abilities.

Voids and Psinks are mostly oblivious to the Seepage around them. Telepathic illusions have no effect on them, although associated physical phenomena can be seen, and physical manifestations can harm them as normal. They are limited to their five senses for gathering information and are unable to see spirits. Even Foci find it difficult to affect a Void directly, having to use rituals that affect physical objects in the Void's proximity. Psinks, while able to witness these physical effects, have a draining effect on any manifestations – illusions fade from sight and spirits are weakened or destroyed. Finally, it is very difficult for the supernatural to possess or corrupt a Void or Psink.

SEEPAGE

Prior to WWII, Aegis' predecessor the Watch was founded to investigate and combat the paranormal and the occult. It is easy to forget these roots with the constant and dangerous battle against alien threats, but Aegis' investigations into the supernatural have continued to this day.

Nearly a quarter century ago, Aegis gained full access to an occult text which came to be known as *The Queens Tome*. Discovered in the southern part of Queens, New York on May 17, 1983, the book is 400 pages of hand-written, paranoid, encoded scrawl originally penned in the 1950s. It took ten years to decipher most of the text. Even though it was discovered that some pages had been removed, and others remain indecipherable, *The Queens Tome* remains the biggest breakthrough in the field. Its paranoid ramblings revealed the nature of supernatural energies and the previously undiscovered mechanics of paranormal activity. Excerpts have been included here.



Knowledge of these basics often gives Aegis agents an advantage when dealing with supernatural threats, but it is still only limited information. *The Queens Tome* revealed that at the heart of these supernatural horrors is what is known as Seepage.

WHAT IS SEEPAGE?

We sit on the edge of automation with cities growing taller and thicker than any natural forest. Yet the poor sleep in hovels in these steel prisons. A surplus of food is grown and then burnt to thwart price fluctuations, while millions starve. As is readily witnessed, our power routinely surpasses our capabilities to control it, and our harvest is often not what we have sown. It is the same with our latent supernatural capabilities, the actual nature of which has yet to be described. How could such power evolve without the ability to master it? Energies so great they cannot be contained, but so abstract they cannot be tapped . . . perhaps it is just our way.

—The Queens Tome

Seepage is the uncontrolled psychic energies that stem from mankind itself. It is a psychically active world-mind guided by humanity's own fear. We contribute to it naturally every day, an endless supply of psychic energy seeping out of our bodies as our "aura." It leaks out into the world and creates potential psychic phenomena waiting for a trigger of some kind to manifest. It is guided by our fear and is responsible for all supernatural activity. It pools into certain locations, corrupts individuals, and manifests in our reality.

Even though some have realized their psychic potential, thus decreasing the Seepage issued, the increasing population feeds the levels of Seepage at a growing rate. Additionally, more psychic energy is released during times of fear, stress, or anxiety. As our society becomes increasingly stressful, the world's subconscious contribution to Seepage grows.

Seepage is not so much simple energy as it is psychic in nature, tainted by fear and anxiety. Over time and in great concentration it becomes sentient, twisted and insane, lurking beyond normal perceptions. It feeds on the beliefs of mankind, preying on human fear. It can build upon the superstitions of an area – that haunted house no one dares enter, the tales of werewolves on the moors or vampires preying on Romanian innocents. It can even manifest itself, sparking a new level of fear and paranoia in a region and adding yet more Seepage emissions. The stories then spread and with them the belief and the fear, so that these manifestations can solidify into enduring phenomena. It can also enter the hearts and minds of mankind, corrupting individuals and twisting their bodies as they sink more deeply into insanity (see Corruption, p. 202).

AMBIENT SEEPAGE POINTS TABLE

Seepage Level 1 (normal ambient Seepage): 1-10 SPs (or roll D10(5))

Seepage Level 2 (agitated Pool or Locus): 5-50 SPs (or roll D10 x 5(25))

Seepage Level 3 (agitated Locus): 30-100 SPs or more (or roll (D10 x 7) +30(65))

Times of Power: +5 points at noon or midnight (lasts D4(2) Turns).

+5 Points during a full moon (or the day before or after).

+20 Points during a solstice or equinox.

+30 Points on the four days of power*.

Presence of a Focus: +2 x Willpower of the Focus (cumulative for multiple Foci, or multiple levels of the Focus Drawback).

Presence of a Psink: –2 x Willpower of the Psink (cumulative for multiple Psinks, or multiple levels of the Psink Drawback).

* The four days of power are Imbolc (Feb 2nd), Beltane (April 30th), Lughnasadh (August 1st), and Samhain (October 31st). Beltane is often known as May Day, celebrated on May 1st, and Chroniclers may wish to use May 1st as the day of power instead. Lughnasadh is also known as Lammas. Samhain is more commonly known as All Hallows Eve or Halloween.

SEEPAGE LEVELS

The supernatural energies that afflict the human race encircle the globe in a sea of swirling menace. Within its embodiment are pools and eddies following the currents of terror.

–The Queens Tome

Seepage levels are unaffected by population – while a highly populated area may have more contributors to the ambient supernatural potential, the Seepage levels may not be so high. In places far from population center, where the people are steeped in superstition and fear, high Seepage levels are more likely to be found.

In a place full of mystery or superstition, or a place of extremely emotional events – especially those resulting in death – Seepage gathers into a reservoir of psychic energy called a Pool. Pools can be shrines, battlefields, crime scenes, haunted houses, churches, or any place of strong emotional impact. Stories can build upon a Pool's reputation, feeding it until it grows to become a place where few dare to venture.

A Pool can gain enough power that it can outgrow local tales and become a worldwide legend. A Pool of this significance becomes known as a Locus. Some notable Loci are places such as Easter Island and Stonehenge, holy places such as Jerusalem, the Vatican, and Tenochtitlan, and mystical or legendary locations such as the Pyramids and the Bermuda Triangle.

The base level of ambient Seepage everywhere is one. The Seepage level of an average Pool is also one, but it can increase to two if it becomes "agitated." The normal level for a Locus is two, rising at agitated times to three. Usually a Pool or Locus has one or more paranormal manifestations linked to it (see p. 201). Agitation is usually due to the presence of a Focus, although the Chronicler can determine other causes, such as increased psychic activity, ritual use, trauma, or death.

While the actual Seepage level of an area varies only slightly, the amount of supernatural energy actually present at any given time can fluctuate wildly over a course of just a few days. This amount is measured in Seepage points. Seepage points are decreased when used to fuel rituals or powers. They are replenished at midnight, making that time particularly unstable.

The Ambient Seepage Points Table provides guidelines. Chroniclers who prefer a more dynamic supernatural presence may increase the SPs in any given area, just as Chroniclers who wish to limit the amount of paranormal activity should reduce the SPs to suit.

SEEPAGE AND ESSENCE

Players of other **Unisystem** games, especially *WitchCraft* and *Armageddon*, may wonder at the similarities between Seepage and Essence. Seepage can be used to fuel rituals as Essence is used to fuel Invocations, but Chroniclers should be careful of merging the Invocations and natural magic of *WitchCraft* with the rituals and Seepage-based magic of *Conspiracy X*. The fast "spell-slinging" Gifted from *WitchCraft* are far more powerful than the ritualists in *Conspiracy X*, as they suffer little danger from their magic-use.

FOCI

Foci are in a unique state between physical form and intangible energies, not only affecting (strengthening) any supernatural occurrence in their presence, but drastically reacting with entities (other Foci and Infused). The Infused and other entities or events draw on the ambient power about a Focus, whether or not he is willing to lend it.

–The Queens Tome

An individual who possesses an unusually strong connection to Seepage is called a Focus. These rare persons become supernatural magnets; strange and inexplicable paranormal activities surround them. Being a Focus is a paranormal Drawback (see p. 80).

As a link between the natural and the supernatural, Foci are constantly surrounded by higher than normal Seepage levels. Other Foci react to them; the Infused and other entities draw on the Foci's ambient power. Foci are drawn to occult skills, wrestling with constant threat of corruption. They can attempt to harness ambient supernatural energies, appearing wildly psychic or as a powerful sorceress. This manipulation can be done in a variety of ways, either by ritual or by attempting to provoke a manifestation.

Provocation

Odd things happen around a Focus all the time. Being a supernatural magnet, regular weirdness is commonplace, from falling fish to spontaneous combustion and poltergeist activity. They are rarely affected by it themselves, the people around them bearing the brunt of these strange happenings.

Sometimes a Focus can provoke supernatural happenings. Usually, this is subconscious and she is unaware of it happening. During times of stress or heightened emotion, the Cast Member can make a Difficult Willpower Test, modified by the Seepage level of the area (this can be either positive if the Focus wants something to happen, or negative if she is trying to resist something happening). Success in the Provocation Test requires the Chronicler to choose a suitable manifestation (see p. 201).

The Cast Member may try to gain control over the manifestation, whether she wanted it to occur or not. The Focus must pass a Difficult Willpower Test resisted by the Seepage level of the area. For example, on a Locus, the Chronicler would roll D10 + 3 (the Seepage level) if the Locus was agitated. The winner (either the Focus or the Chronicler) may control the manifestation as she sees fit. If the Focus has purchased the Focus Drawback more than once, the Chronicler may apply a modifier to produce more startling effects or apply more or less control over the manifestations. For more controlled and predictable results of manipulating Seepage, the Focus can try using rituals.

Rituals

A Focus (or any other agent, except for Voids or Psinks) may try to manipulate Seepage to do what would be considered "magic." Magic is performed through lengthy, time-consuming rituals and precise steps that must be followed correctly. Errors risk spell failure or, worse, corruption.

Rituals usually involve preparing a space, painting symbols, arranging props, and cleansing and consecrating items and locations. The ritual itself involves a series of steps, words, dances, or chants that needs to be repeated as necessary. Sometimes an offering of life energy may be necessary. This centers the participant and communicates her desires to the Seepage. In most cases, the specifics are dependent upon the ritual and the tradition of the ritualist.

Rituals Skill

Any operative may have the Rituals skill (see p. 109) and any number of individual spells. The Rituals Type reflects the tradition of the ritualist, whether that is Taoist, Ceremonial, Shamanic, Caribbean, etc. Cast Members using different traditions perform the same "spell"; only the execution of the ritual differs greatly depending upon the belief of the ritualist.

Each individual ritual must be learned separately, usually after weeks of research or being trained by an experienced occultist. Each separate spell has an effective skill level, and they are purchased as Special skills (see p. 184). Learning a new ritual after character creation costs eight character points for the first level. The agent also needs to have access to the spell to begin with, either from a tutor, an occult library, or an arcane tome (ritual specifics are purposely kept out of all but the most limited access HERMES databases). The costs may be increased or reduced at the Chronicler's discretion depending upon the power of the ritual and the time taken to research or learn it. Indeed, uncovering an important spell could be the goal of an entire story or adventure.

Each individual ritual skill level cannot exceed the agent's Rituals skill level. For example, Max has Rituals (Voodoo) 4, and the ritual Banish Spirit 4. In order to increase her Banish Spirit level, she'll have to increase her Rituals (Voodoo) skill first.

Performing Rituals

In most cases a ritual is performed by succeeding at an Intelligence and the appropriate ritual skill Task (this could be varied if the ritual involves many complicated dance steps, in which case Dexterity would be used). Certain conditions apply to each ritual: some require a certain number of participants (all of which should be familiar with the ritual to be used), others require excessive preparation. The Chronicler should apply modifiers to the roll depending on various factors: increasing the area of effect, extending the duration, quality of (or lack of) link to the target, increasing the number of targets to be affected, casting the ritual instantly (if possible), unconsecreated ground, etc. In times of crisis, an agent my attempt to crack open an occult tome and try to invoke magic without preparation, although this is counted as an unskilled attempt and should be heavily penalized.

Each spell has a Threshold Level. This is the minimal number of Seepage points that must be available and expended in order for the ritualist to complete the spell successfully. Without the requisite Seepage, the spell is unpowdered and fails to work. Trained ritualists can sense whether sufficient Seepage exists in a given area to support any particular ritual using either their Read Aura Basic ESP ability, or through a period of concentration and a Perception and Rituals Task. However, the act of performing a ritual tends to draw Seepage energy to the area, and an additional D4(2) Seepage points are available to power the ritual for every Success Level in the ritual Task.

If enough Seepage is expended but the spell Task fails, the potential for Corruption exists. All ritualists involved must pass a Difficult Willpower Test. Failing this means that the Seepage has managed to worm its way into the ritualist and take root, starting to corrupt the agent and twist her psyche (see p. 202). A roll of one on a spell Task always results in corruption.

Rituals List

Below is a sampling of rituals available to characters. Chroniclers and players can use the rituals presented as a guide for creating their own.

Banish Spirit Ritual

Threshold: 16 **Range:** Ritual space
Duration: Instant **Area:** 1 target
Length: 1-4 hours **Participants:** 1

This ritual can be used to banish a spirit from a person or place. A possessed person can be exorcised or a haunted house can be "cleansed." Banishing does not return the spirit to some "lower realm" or "spirit world"; instead the spirit disperses. The pattern of the spirit's essence remains in the vague flows of the Seepage, however, and it can be summoned again.

Unless previously bound, spirits attempt either to flee or to attack the ritualist and disrupt the banishing. The spirit is banished as soon as the ritual is completed. As listed, the ritual works only on ordinary ghosts. More powerful spirits (such as demons) impose various penalties and requirements on the spell Task. Furthermore, this ritual cannot be performed remotely through a link or other connection to the spirit (see Summon Spirit Ritual, at 200).

Bind Spirit

Threshold: 10 **Range:** Ritual space
Duration: 24 hours **Area:** 1 target
Length: 30 minutes **Participants:** 1

As soon as the Bind Spirit ritual commences, the spirit is bound and may take no action except generating telepathic illusions in an attempt to interfere with the ritual. If the ritualist succeeds in an Intelligence and ritual skill Task resisted by a Simple Willpower Test of the spirit, the spirit is bound until the next sunrise or sunset. At that point, the spirit is free from the magician's control unless another binding is performed. Depending on its power and how it has been treated, newly freed spirits either flee or attack the ones who bound them. However, it is common practice for the ritualist to command the spirit to depart. This command effectively banishes the spirit and disperses the supernatural energy that imbues it. In this case, the spirit may not reappear until it is summoned again. The basic version of this ritual only affects ordinary ghosts and polter-

geists. A more complex version, with greater Threshold and participant requirements is necessary for more powerful corrupted entities.

Any version of the Bind Spirit ritual may be performed simultaneously with any of the summoning rituals. However, a separate occultist must perform each different spell in the same ritual space.

Ritual to Cure Corruption

Threshold: 28 **Range:** Ritual space
Duration: Instant **Area:** 1 target
Length: 2 hours **Participants:** 3

This ritual purifies the mind and body of the subject from the adverse affects of supernatural corruption. To benefit from the ritual, the subject must be present and conscious. It may be advisable to forcibly restrain subjects who have been significantly corrupted.

The difficulty of the ritual depends on the level of corruption of the subject. If the target has not gained any stages of corruption yet, no penalty is imposed. For every stage of corruption gained a –1 penalty arises. Those who have snapped and become Forsaken or Infused incur a –6 penalty.

If the ritual is performed successfully, the subject suffers D6 x 2(6) Life Points damage from the strain involved. The subject must then pass a Simple Willpower Test, with penalties depending on her corruption level similar to those imposed on the spell Task. If successful, the subject rolls D10 and consults the Ritual to Cure Corruption Effects Table to determine the effects. If the subject fails, the ritual succeeds but the subject's connection to the Seepage is entirely destroyed. She gains the Psychic Void Drawback.

If the spell Task fails after the Threshold has been reached, the subject automatically gains one stage of corruption and immediately tests to see if she snaps. An Infused becomes instantly enraged and has access to Seepage points equal to her Willpower plus the Threshold level of the ritual. Everyone else involved in the ritual must test to see if they have been corrupted as usual.

Summon Spirit Ritual

Threshold: 12 + Seepage Pool of the spirit
Range: Ritual space
Duration: Instant **Area:** Ritual space
Length: 3 hours **Participants:** 1

The completion of a successful spirit summoning causes the desired ghost or spirit to manifest itself within the confines of the ritual space. Unless the magician is attempting to summon the spirit of any nearby ghost, a link to the particular ghost or spirit desired is needed. Any normal psychic link to the person when she was living, such as a piece of clothing, works, as does dirt from her grave or a chip off her headstone. A blood relative (parent, child, or sibling) can also serve as a link. Having the complete or nearly complete corpse or skeleton of the individual being summoned provides a +2 bonus to the ritual Task. More powerful spirits (such as demons) impose penalties to the ritual Task. If the spirit is summoned against its will, a Resisted Task versus the spirit's Willpower may be necessary.

When summoned, most spirits manifest a visible telepathic illusion. Others speak invisibly or use telekinesis to move objects about. This ritual gives the spirit seven Seepage points with which to manifest its powers. Unless the spirit is bound when it arrives, its reactions depend upon its personality and the circumstances of its summoning. In general, unless the summoner has some useful information or service to offer the spirit, most spirit reactions range from uninterested to angry.

Summoning a banished spirit effectively recreates it; the spirit does not exist between the time it is banished and the next time it is summoned.

Ritual to Cure Corruption Effects Table

1–2: The subject develops an adverse reaction to Seepage and becomes a Psink instead of a Void. All stages of corruption and the corruption itself are removed.

3–4: Subject remains corrupted and keeps the first two stages of corruption she attained. All other stages are removed.

5–6: Subject remains corrupted and keeps the first stage of corruption she attained. All other stages are removed.

7–8: If the subject was a Focus, this ability is lost. Otherwise, the subject is fully cured with no ill effects. All stages of corruption and the corruption itself are removed.

9–10: Subject is totally cured with no ill effects. All stages of corruption and the corruption itself are removed.

Warding Circle Ritual

Threshold: 12
Duration: 1 day
Length: 5 minutes
Range: Ritual space
Area: Ritual space
Participants: 1

This ritual creates a barrier that ghosts, demons, and the Infused cannot pass. All warding circles keep such beings from crossing the boundary of the circle in either direction. The barrier must include a closed line such as a circle or square that covers an area no larger than nine yards in any direction. Ordinary humans can pass in and out of the warding without hindrance. Supernatural creatures can neither move past the circle nor use any of their abilities to attempt to break the circle or to affect anything on the other side of its boundary. On its side of the circle, the spirit may act as it wills.

A number of spirits are quite annoyed at being placed in warding circles but are much less angry at such treatment than being bound. If provided with sufficient rewards, some spirits do not resist being placed in warding circles.

Each warding circle has some physical mark denoting its boundaries. If the boundary of the circle is broken in any fashion, the spirit is instantly freed. While a spirit may not attempt to break this boundary itself, it can communicate with individuals outside the warding circle and can attempt to convince them to break the circle.

When the duration of the ritual expires, the spirit is freed. Since this ritual does not restrain a spirit until the circle is completed, it is normally performed before the spirit is actually summoned. The magician performing this ritual may create the boundary from either the inside or the outside. When the Task is completed, the Success Levels gained determines the strength of the ward. An entity may attempt to escape, but it will need to win a Resisted Task, using its Strength and Willpower against the strength of the ward doubled.

Creating Your Own Rituals

Chroniclers may wish to create their own rituals. Imagine how powerful the spell will be (how many people will be affected, how long the effects will last, how dramatic these effects are). As a rough guide, add +2 Threshold for every extra person it affects, +5 for every 12 hours the effect lasts, and +5 to +10 or more depending upon how powerful the effects are. Increase the length of time it takes to cast proportionally. If the ritual appears to be upsetting game balance or if the ritual affects the story too drastically, increase the numbers and add rare ingredient requirements, such as blood of an Infused. The Chronicler should feel free to experiment and create rituals that suit her own particular Chronicle or game.

Manifestations

Manifestation refers to the generation of any supernatural activity that does not have a substantial physical form. For example, a vampire is not a manifestation, but the supernatural force it uses to mesmerize its victims is. Phenomena, telepathic illusions (TIs), and Infused and Focus powers are also manifestations.

All manifestations are "fueled" by Seepage. The higher the levels of Seepage, the more active an area is, creating manifestations and illusions to scare, confuse, or worse.

Some common manifestations are listed below. Chroniclers may create their own supernatural effects to enhance the story. Infused powers are covered later (see p. 206)

Divination

A number of locations and individuals are known for their recurring but unpredictable visions. The manifestation results in sudden supernatural visions that provide true information about a place, person, object, or event, both past and future.

Telepathic Illusion (TI)

These are illusions that affect the human mind *en masse*. They're not limited to visual illusions; they can be cold spots in a room, feelings of despair, or bizarre or ethereal sounds. Most images are shadowy and unreal, although realistic images have been documented on rare occasions. The illusions exist independently of individuals but can be sensed only by minds capable of ESP (not Voids or Psinks).

Nothing manifests physically; the Seepage reaches into the mind of the victim and inspires fear. It does not usually tailor the illusion, just generic terrors to feed the Seepage. The number of Seepage points poured into a telepathic illusion, either by the Chronicler controlling the Seepage or by the player-controlled Focus, determines how long an illusion lasts. A three Seepage point illusion is fleeting and lasts D10 seconds; a six Seepage point illusion persists for up to D10 minutes; 10 Seepage points ensure that the illusion remains for a full hour.

Phenomena

Any time a telepathic illusion manifests, there is a chance that it will be accompanied by a phenomenon to lend credibility and possibly evidence to witness' claims. The Chronicler should roll D10 and add double the Seepage level of the area. If that result is nine or greater, a phenomenon manifests along with the TI. Phenomena are generally characterized by two distinctive traits. The first is an ability to be perceived by nonpsychic means. This means that Voids are able to sense the manifestation. Mechanical and electronic devices are also able to record evidence of phenomena, such as the vague image of the "ghost ship" that witnesses claim to have seen as plain as day.

The second trait of phenomena is considerably stranger – the appearance of ectoplasm. This clear or slightly discolored slime or film is sometimes found in areas where the supernatural has manifested. It may even cover witnesses or entire buildings. The ectoplasm dissipates in an hour after the phenomenon disappears, leaving no trace to be analyzed.

Many phenomena are routinely encountered by those who investigate the paranormal and arcane. A few of the more common are ball lightning, crop circles, flames, vortexes of power, and spontaneous levitation, telekinesis, or teleportation. All are manifestations frequently associated with both the presence of a Focus and recurring supernatural activity in Pools and Loci.

CORRUPTION

Corruption is a permanent mental change induced by Seepage. It is a phenomenon that works directly on man and occurs in degrees over an extended period. Those of strong will may resist the insidious effects for years, but the untiring onslaught will be their doom. The Corrupted are in constant danger. They are living with the dark knowledge that they are becoming something else, drowning in forces as old as thought.

–The Queens Tome

When a character becomes corrupted, she is on her way to becoming something not entirely human. The process is slow and nearly inevitable, although with careful preparation and planning the final step can be postponed indefinitely.

Causes of Corruption

Corruption can occur in a number of circumstances. One of the primary causes is a failed ritual. Other possibilities include spirit possession or a specific ritual. Chroniclers may devise new and fiendish means to corrupt the characters, as desired. Most should involve Difficult Willpower Tests to resist, with penalties appropriate to the situation. Some causes may be so powerful that no roll is possible. In this case, the risks should be very apparent to the characters, even to Voids. Corruption is rarely subtle and Cast Members mess with this dangerous stuff at their own risk.

The exact circumstances surrounding the corruption itself influences the kind of corruption involved. To illustrate, vampiric blood-letting, if successful, may corrupt toward the creation of another vampire or similar predatory creature. In the end, the Chronicler must decide what type of corruption infects the host.

Stages of Corruption

When a character becomes corrupted, the Chronicler secretly decides which stage is currently attempting to impress itself upon the victim. The Chronicler selects a suitable Drawback. This is usually something violent or mental such as Emotional Problems (Anger) or Psychological Problems (Severe Cruelty).

Each time the character finds herself in a situation where the potential Drawback may be applicable, the Chronicler rolls D10 and adds the local Seepage level. If the result is less than nine, the relevant corruption stage fails to affect the character's mind for the moment. If the result is over nine, the character must make a Difficult Willpower Test, with a penalty equal to the Seepage level in the area. If she fails, she gains the current Drawback and takes one step closer to becoming Infused or Forsaken (see pp. 204-205). A successful Willpower Test fends off the encroaching madness. Voids and Psinks are fully susceptible to corruption, although they may not understand or believe the cause of their descent into darkness. They resist corruption with a Simple Willpower Test, modified by the area's Seepage level, however.

A character never has to make more than one Willpower Test to resist corruption in a single day, whether successful or not. Whenever a stage is gained, no points are spent or gained for that Drawback. It is the work of the corruption.

For purposes of corruption, if the character already has a Quality or Drawback which could be associated with the type of corruption trying to manifest, the Chronicler may deem that one stage completed, even if the character possessed the trait long before she became corrupted. For example, if someone is paranoid to begin with (perhaps taken during character generation) and then becomes corrupted, if the Chronicler decides that Psychological Problems (Paranoia) is a suitable stage of corruption, the character is considered to have already completed that stage and already one step closer to snapping.

April has been surprised by a vampiric predator and bitten. She fails her Willpower Test and the Chronicler decides that she has been corrupted. As it was a "vampire bite," the Chronicler chooses a selection of suitable Drawbacks that slowly turn the agent into a similar predatory creature. The Chronicler draws up the following list of six stages:

Adrenaline Surge (see p. 63): Potential predators in a killing and feeding frenzy or cornered by enemies are often capable of feats of superhuman strength and therefore should be treated with the utmost caution.

Psychological Problems (Severe Obsession) (see p. 76): Drinking human blood. This symbolizes victory over the prey and transference of its power.

Emotional Problems (Anger) (see p. 68): This results from a primal hunting instinct.

Psychological Problems (Severe Cruelty) (see p. 76): Not surprisingly, the first reaction is nearly always violence. As the corruption progresses, the character will stop resisting the cruelty and eventually welcome it.

Psychological Problems (Severe Paranoia) (see p. 76): As a hunter herself, the character is always wary of other hunters. The mental instability often causes her to see hunters where none exist.

Psychological Problems (Severe Phobia) (see p. 77): As the corruption begins to take root the character fears objects that she believes have power over her, such as crucifixes or even the light of day.

The Chronicler decides that paranoia will try to take hold first, forcing April to make suitable resistance rolls should a situation arise that could trigger the corruption.

Snapping

Each time a stage of corruption is completed, the character runs the risk of "snapping" and instantly becoming either Infused or Forsaken. The corrupted individual must pass a Simple Willpower Test, with a penalty equal to the number of stages of corruption she has undergone. If she fails, she snaps, and the Seepage instantly transforms her.

A snapped character must make a Difficult Willpower Test, this time with the number of stages of corruption she has completed added as a bonus to the roll. If she succeeds the Test, she becomes Infused.

If she fails the Test, she is unable to withstand the occult energies tearing through her mind. She breaks and becomes one of the pitiful, but dangerous, Forsaken. When a character becomes one of the Forsaken, she immediately gains any further Qualities and Drawbacks that the Chronicler decides will complete the transformation, such as it is. She believes that she is Infused – a werewolf, Rasputin, the anti-Christ, etc. – but possesses none of the abilities. The Forsaken are insane but not (necessarily) stupid, and in many ways they can be just as dangerous as the Infused, only without the powers.

Foci are the exceptions. Due to their already strong connection to the supernatural, a Focus who is corrupted always becomes an Infused when she snaps.

A few months after her vampire encounter, April has completed several stages of corruption, possessing several severe Psychological Problems. The current stage of corruption that is working its way into her increasingly warped psyche is an obsession with drinking human blood. April's cell has just ended a car chase in a violent car crash and one of the operatives was seriously injured. April's cellmates leave her to watch over their fallen comrade, concerned that her recent personality changes could cause trouble with the authorities. While looking after her unconscious charge, she sees the blood and the compulsion rises within her. She fails her Willpower Test and completes her fourth stage of corruption. Immediately, she is faced with another Willpower Test with a penalty of –4. She fails miserably and snaps.

As her last act for the character, April's player rolls to see if she becomes Infused or Forsaken. Fortunately for her colleagues, she fails her ascension to Infused. When April's cellmates return, they find her sitting atop a newly dead corpse with blood dripping from her mouth and a feral gleam in her eyes.

SNAPPED CHARACTERS

For the most part, any character who snaps and becomes one of the Infused or Forsaken is lost to the player. The Chronicler should remove the character from the campaign, or take her over. She might become a particularly potent enemy, as she may be deeply familiar with the other agents' lives and secrets.

On the other hand, an ambitious Chronicler might allow the player to keep her character and continue playing. It would be particularly creepy if the other players are unaware of this transformation and the change acts in subtle ways. The details of such an insidious plot twist are left to individual Chroniclers and players.

THE FEEL OF CORRUPTION

If someone is unfortunate enough to become corrupted it can lead to some interesting (nasty, but interesting) events within a campaign. The key to playing corruption is to create a situation where the character feels the forces attempting to destroy her soul. Although a roll against the corruption is made only in appropriate circumstances, the morbid forces are always present. Present the character with dreams and other dark omens to remind her of this. Fill her mind with voices telling her to perform unspeakable acts. Use whatever tricks are necessary to make her aware that her psyche is at war with sinister forces.

CORRUPTED BEINGS

Many whom corruption transforms into Infused and the Forsaken become predatory monsters, crazed magicians, obsessed serial killers, and fiery-eyed cult leaders. These dark paths are not the only possible results of corruption, however. At its heart, corruption is not about becoming evil, it is about ceasing to be human. When Seepage enters the deepest reaches of a person's being, it slowly removes all facets of personality that fall outside the pattern desired by the Seepage. This pattern differs from individual to individual and depends both on the method of corruption and the specifics of their personalities.

Someone who is full of anger and hatred may become a werewolf if Infused, or a cannibalistic serial killer if Forsaken. A scholarly magician who is corrupted by a failed ritual might instead become a magical adept. This corrupted being's fascination with magic slowly drives away friends and associates, leaving the scholar alone in an isolated cabin with only books and obsession.

Archetypes

Being corrupted is at its essence leaving humanity behind and becoming a living archetype. Even if the archetype is one of love and caring, humanity is lost in the process. The essence of being an archetype is being concerned only with matters relating to that particular nature and function. Friends, hobbies, life goals, and even personality quirks not directly relevant are slowly lost as the corrupted being divests itself of the remaining tatters of its humanity.

Archetypes are single, easily defined, culturally universal concepts. Archetypes form the basis of most myths and legends. The wise magician, the holy hermit, the young hero with great potential, the wicked stepmother, the wildman or wildwoman, death personified, the berserk warrior, the sacred fool, and the evil tempter are all archetypes found in stories told throughout the world. In the West, a variety of archetypal images can be found in Tarot cards, Arthurian myths, and legends of the Indo-European religions. Psychologist Carl Jung was the first person to define and categorize archetypes, but they have always existed.

It is important to remember that there are no "species" or "breeds" of monsters. The similarities are based on the laws of magic and the human psychology, not those of biology. Some of those who are attacked by a predator and survive slowly become predators. They need not become the same archetype of predator as their attackers, however. The specific archetype "chosen" by any individual corrupted being depends on a combination of circumstance and quirks of her personal psychology.

The Infused

Infused keep the stages of corruption that they have already gone through but do not progress through any new stages. While many Infused transform only after their sanity has been entirely eroded by corruption, others transform early and have a largely sane human mind in the body of a living archetype. For some, this transformation is a great boon.

The most disturbing cases are those of predators who have suffered little mental corruption. Suddenly a relatively sane human being is living in a body with extended canines, or one that has become hairy, muscular, and fearsome. Many Infused crack under this strain and rapidly become insane. Others learn to accept their new lives. A few are even capable of functioning in society by learning to keep their unusual abilities and physiologies carefully hidden.

Even if the mental changes were minor and few, however, the mind is easily led by the body. Over the course of months, years, or sometimes decades, the Infused slips more and more into the mentality of her archetypes. This process can be quite gradual, and for some exceptionally strong-willed individuals it may be almost imperceptible, but it almost always happens. Some Infused are capable of living for centuries, but very few make it past their first 100 years with their humanity intact. Living in the body of an archetype, with needs, desires, and

powers far beyond those of humanity, slowly makes the once-human mind and spirit into a fitting occupant for the body.

Whatever the origin of the Infused, or its mental stability, these creatures have access to startling powers. These abilities may be powered with ambient Seepage Points or internal Seepage from their Infused contamination.

Sample Infused
Stalker

STR 5	**DEX** 5	**CON** 5
INT 2	**PER** 3	**WIL** 2
LP 50	**End** 35	
Spd 20	**Seepage** 22	

Powers: Mask, Regeneration, Thrall

Drawbacks: Psychological Problems (Severe Cruelty, Severe Paranoia, Severe Claustrophobia)

Skills: Brawling 4, Dodge 3, Stealth 4

Claws: D6(3) x Strength

The Stalker feeds off fear. It revels in the thrill of the chase, allowing itself to be seen to heighten the fear in its victim. It is a silent killer that hides in darkened alleys, under the bed, and in deserted warehouses and cemeteries. Human in appearance, its only mutation is its increased physical capabilities and sharpened claws and teeth.

The Forsaken

For the Forsaken, the path beyond humanity is somewhat different. When her physical transformation fails, the Forsaken's mind breaks and the only remnant left of her shattered personality is the archetype itself. Forsaken are no longer mentally human. They have become fully focused upon those activities and interests central to the archetype they have become. All other activities and desires become irrelevant and are seen as incomprehensible, impure, or incorrect.

Forsaken are incapable of anything other than the most superficial conversation if it does not relate to their nature. With rare exceptions, Forsaken rapidly lose their jobs, family, and friends and end up as hermits, homeless people, or drifters.

Seepage Pools

When a character snaps, her entire being is saturated by Seepage, causing her to lose her humanity entirely. Her internal Essence Pool is effectively replaced by Seepage, which can be spent to fuel any of the powers presented below, in addition to spending any ambient Seepage points at the location. Seepage spent in this way is recovered at the same rate as Essence in humans (see p. 181).

Mentally transformed but lacking any of the abilities of the Infused, most Forsaken believe that they actually possess special powers. Any attempt to disprove or make fun of their claims of inhuman supernatural power are met with fear, disbelief, or murderous rage.

Those Forsaken who understand that they lack the supernatural powers of the Infused can be equally dangerous. Most of these individuals try to acquire such powers as their primary goal, at any cost. Bizarre rituals, self-mutilation, frantic quests to obtain certain special items, and even cannibalism are all examples of desperate measures to acquire Infused powers. There is evidence that at least some of the Forsaken actually succeed in finding the power they seek, but most fail, often in highly unpleasant ways. Legends of rituals that can cure the Forsaken exist, but no such ritual has been unearthed thus far.

Sample Forsaken

STR 4	**DEX** 3	**CON** 5
INT 2	**PER** 4	**WIL** 2
LP 44	**End** 38	
Spd 20	**Seepage** 20	

Powers: None

Drawbacks: Psychological Problems (Severe Cruelty, Severe Paranoia, Severe Claustrophobia, Severe Obsession – Become Infused)

A powerless predator, hiding in alleys and feeding off of rats and garbage. She knows she missed her chance, but if she can just prove herself, a couple of helpless victims, and maybe, just maybe . . . it didn't work before, but if she just kills enough, the powers will come . . . maybe . . .

MUTATION

Corrupted beings often mutate in ways that facilitate their archetypes. Possible mutations include increases in attributes, the rise of Qualities or Drawbacks, armor-like skin, and natural body weaponry. For game purposes, the only limits to keep in mind for mutation are those posed by the physics of the human form. The range of human height is two to nine feet and weight ranges from 50–1,500 lbs. Claws, fangs, and fur (full body hair) are easily documented. Although the human form can be stretched to almost unrecognizable limits, it will always be human. Man cannot change into a wolf or a bat, nor can he gain attributes that cannot be attained by mammals (*e.g.*, feathers and a beak), although simulations are common (humans cannot grow scales, but they can attain scale-like skin).

INFUSED POWERS

The following list includes some of the powers the Infused display. Chroniclers are encouraged to create their own supernatural powers to add variety and keep the players guessing. The list includes a number of special abilities powered by Seepage points. This energy may be drawn from the ambient Seepage points in the area around the corrupted being, or directly from the Infused's internal Seepage Pool. The points are consumed to fuel the power. In addition to the powers listed, corrupted beings frequently have psychic or ritual powers.

CREATING CORRUPTED BEINGS

Corrupted beings are rarely minor players in a *Conspiracy X* story, so they should be at least as powerful as starting agents. Most will be far more powerful than that.

Indeed, any Quality, Drawback, or power detailed in any **Unisystem** game might be granted to a corrupted being. In the end, the corrupted being should be as powerful as needed for the story line.

MASK

Masking is a powerful form of TI that corrupted beings use to disguise themselves. It is an illusion limited to the corrupted being's own person. Examples include making oneself "dim" (difficult to see or notice but not technically invisible), a werewolf changing his form at the sight of the full moon, and an angel glowing with the radiance of the heavens.

A 10 Seepage point mask can be seen through with a Simple Willpower Test. A 20 Seepage point mask calls for a Difficult Willpower Test. When a Test is successful, the agent can see through the illusion to the corrupted being behind it, negating any benefits that the illusion provides. Voids and Psinks ignore the effects of illusions entirely. Psinks in the area double the Seepage point costs and may disrupt the effect with their presence.

POSSESSION

By using possession, an intangible corrupted being attempts to project herself into another person's body. The goal is to suppress the victim's identity and allow the corrupted to dominate the body. When the being eventually leaves the possessed body, the poor victim pays the price of the supernatural touching her mind. She must check for corruption with a Difficult Willpower Test; failure means she succumbs.

Possession has no set duration. At every dusk and dawn, the victim may attempt a Simple Willpower Test, resisted by a similar Test by the possessing spirit. Success drives the spirit out.

The possessing spirit may boost her Willpower by one for every 10 Seepage points spent.

REGENERATION

With regeneration, any wound that does not kill the corrupted being outright heals at amazing speeds. In fact, almost any wound can be healed in twenty-four hours, even without medical attention.

Regeneration replaces one Life Point per hour. If faster healing is needed, the corrupted can spend one Seepage point to heal two Life Points in one Turn.

THRALL

Thrall is supernatural emotion control. In many ways it is empathy in reverse. Instead of sensing the emotions and feelings of others, it allows the user to push a particular emotion into the minds of those around her. A corrupted being can use this power to create unnatural fear, hatred, lust, or other emotions within her victims, which threaten to make them lose control of their own actions. Although this ability is very potent, the corrupted never rely on this alone to create her intended mood.

Thrall can also create a field of supernatural charisma – by radiating love and trust, the words spoken by the corrupted being become increasingly hard to ignore. Only the quick of mind and the strong of self will keep their wits about them.

Although this power could be used to induce nearly any emotion, the corrupted normally are capable of invoking only one type particularly suited to their archetypes (*e.g.*, love, fear, depression, fascination). This power affects everyone who can see (or hear) them and lasts for D10 x 10(50) Turns.

A 10 Seepage point thrall can be ignored only if a Simple Willpower Test is passed. A 20 Seepage point thrall requires a Difficult Willpower Test. Voids and Psinks are immune. Psinks also double the Seepage point cost and can sometimes dissipate the effects.

SPIRITS

Sometimes the particularly violent death of an individual leaves a powerful impression upon the Seepage. If the individual is a Focus, his death can lead to the creation of a ghost. Impressions of this ilk can exist for undetermined periods, possessing a quasi-intelligence and sense of self. Normally, the surviving personality is different from that of the dead man. Keep in mind that the originator of the psyche is now dead, and what is left is a supernatural attempt to recreate it.

—The Queens Tome

The Queens Tome indicates that while the existence of actual immortal souls remains entirely beyond the realm of scientific investigation, spirits are phenomena derived from the Seepage, not from the afterlife. A spirit is essentially a recording of the individual's memories and personality that has impressed itself upon the Seepage.

Sentience in Spirits

Many spirit "recordings" are quite fragmentary and contain little more than repeated patterns of actions or responses to specific stimuli. These spirits usually perform single repetitive actions. If summoned or otherwise called from the depths of the Seepage, a spirit responds in highly predicable ways. Many spirits either deliver the same message to everyone they see or treat everyone as a specific person they know well. Often such interactions are entirely harmless. On the other hand, a spirit that reacts as if every human it meets is its murderer can be dangerous. Poltergeists are just as likely to be non-sentient "recordings" as any other type of spirit, but their ability to affect the physical world renders them profoundly dangerous.

The vast majority of spirits are incapable of remembering anything that has happened to them while they have been immaterial. Conversations an hour old are completely forgotten, and mentioning them merely confuses the spirit. In a very real sense, most spirits are trapped in the past.

A few unusual spirits are fully conscious and sentient. Such spirits can communicate clearly and are aware of their surroundings. Unlike the simpler, "recording" ghosts, these spirits are even capable of learning and remembering events that happened after they died. These spirits seem identical in both personality and memories to the actual individuals. Even these more "conscious" spirits are still nothing more than constructs of the Seepage modeled after the minds and consciousness of the once-living individuals. Indeed, on rare occasions, such spirits are produced by individuals who are still alive. These spiritual duplicates, usually known as fetches, are quite rare but strongly indicate that spirits have no direct connection to the persons they appear to be.

Haunts

One curious phenomenon common to many spirits is their limited mobility. Usually, non-sentient spirits can appear in and affect only the region near where they died. Some can appear anywhere in the buildings or the city blocks where they died; others are so limited that they are unable to leave the rooms where they died. Some spirits appear in other places, usually their homes, and a few can appear only in the vicinity of treasured possessions or loved ones.

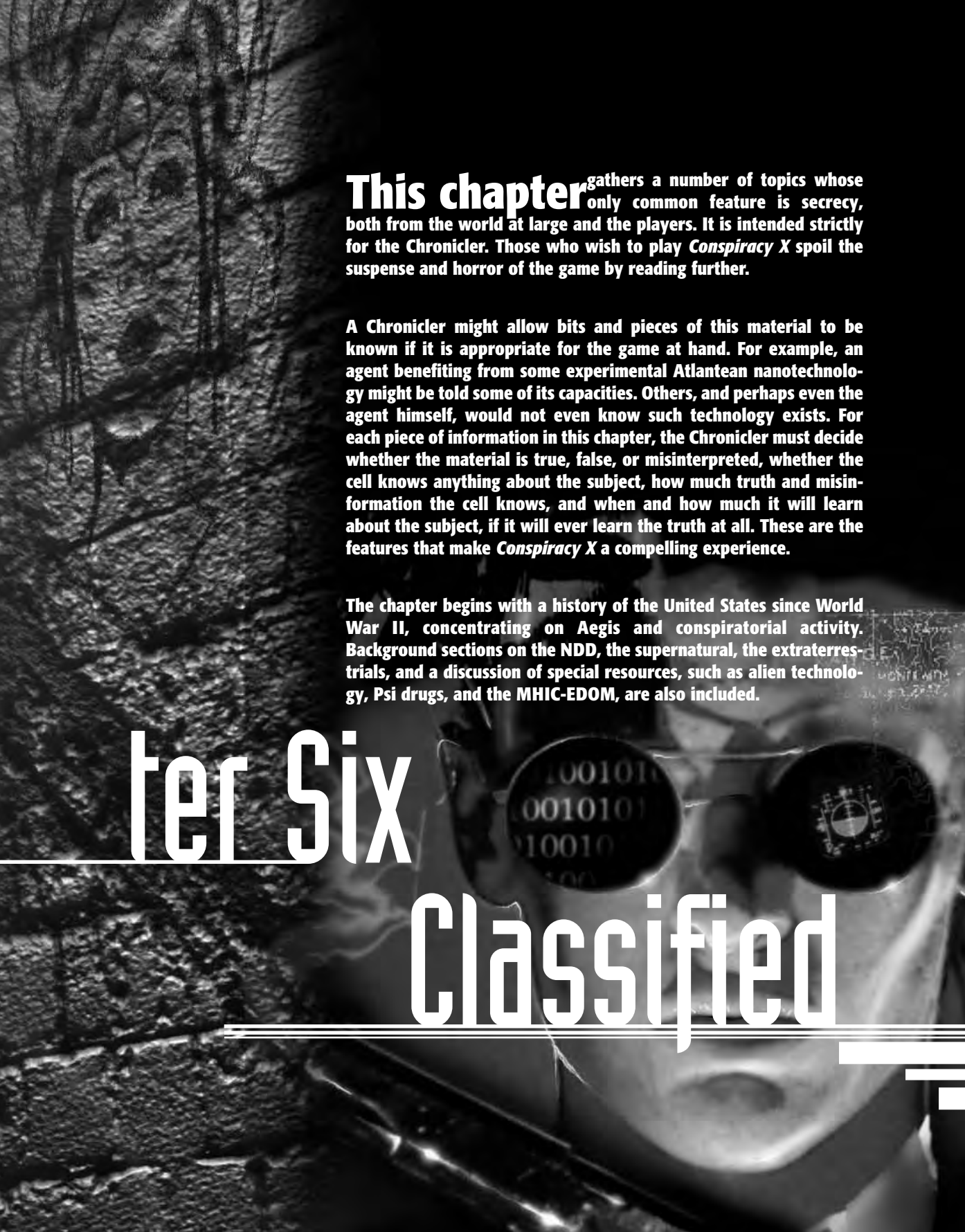
While no one is sure of the reason, there are very few ancient ghosts. With a few notable exceptions, ghosts fade over time. Almost all known ghosts are less than 300 years old, and the majority of ghosts are less than a century old.

Creating Spirits

All spirits use telepathic illusions to generate a visible form and telepathy to speak with others. More powerful spirits, such as poltergeists, can create and control phenomena, such as telekinesis. The most powerful spirits can use possession or can form bodies that can take physical action.

The typical non-sentient "recording ghosts" possess only these powers. Sentient spirits, on the other hand, also possess the full range of knowledge and experience that they had when they were alive. Most sentient spirits have a wide range of skills, depending upon their ages at death and their backgrounds. Normally only mental skills may be used by ghosts. A spirit in possession of someone may use any skills it knows, however, subject to the limitations of the body it is possessing. Spirits generally do not have access to the possessed person's skills and abilities.

Chap



ter Six Classified

This chapter gathers a number of topics whose only common feature is secrecy, both from the world at large and the players. It is intended strictly for the Chronicler. Those who wish to play *Conspiracy X* spoil the suspense and horror of the game by reading further.

A Chronicler might allow bits and pieces of this material to be known if it is appropriate for the game at hand. For example, an agent benefiting from some experimental Atlantean nanotechnology might be told some of its capacities. Others, and perhaps even the agent himself, would not even know such technology exists. For each piece of information in this chapter, the Chronicler must decide whether the material is true, false, or misinterpreted, whether the cell knows anything about the subject, how much truth and misinformation the cell knows, and when and how much it will learn about the subject, if it will ever learn the truth at all. These are the features that make *Conspiracy X* a compelling experience.

The chapter begins with a history of the United States since World War II, concentrating on Aegis and conspiratorial activity. Background sections on the NDD, the supernatural, the extraterrestrials, and a discussion of special resources, such as alien technology, Psi drugs, and the MHIC-EDOM, are also included.

RECENT HISTORY

The following timeline traces certain key events from a time before the creation of Aegis up to the present day. It provides a glimpse into the strange and sinister forces that shape the world of *Conspiracy X*. Readers are warned that this information reflects only the knowledge possessed by the upper echelons of Aegis, and is far from the complete recitation of all events. The information passed down from Aegis Prime may have been distorted; this is the nature of conspiracies. It should be noted that Aegis and the conspiracies presented are primarily American. Many other organizations are active worldwide, each with its own agendas and conspiracies, and Aegis has had contact with many of these.

1930s: WATCHMAKER

Walter Stein, a native of Venice and a British intelligence agent, spent many years studying the occult in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. There he became well acquainted with a fellow student of the arcane arts, Adolf Hitler. Driven by a motivation he did not fully understand, Stein followed Hitler's occult involvement very closely, schooling himself from the same texts. Hence, Stein became the world's foremost authority on Nazi occult activity outside of the party.

Stein soon became frantic over developments in Germany. Hitler's rise to power coincided directly with his initiation into the Secret Doctrine, a gathering of the most elite and powerful mages in the world. Further, the core of the Nazi party leadership was dominated by powerful occultists. Stein realized that, although they had studied the same materials, Hitler had traveled down the shadowed path of dark magic. Stein knew Hitler's admission into the Doctrine could be disastrous for all those who opposed him. With a cadre of dark mystics, Nazi Germany had a secret weapon the Allied forces would be ill-prepared to meet.

The Nazi mystics sensed Walter Stein's presence, and in 1933 he fled to England, narrowly escaping forced service in Germany's Nazi Occult Bureau. Upon arriving in England, Stein warned Winston Churchill of the impending danger posed by Hitler's indoctrination. It was clear that action had to be taken, either to quell Nazi progress in matters arcane or find a way to match it. Stein had further grim news, however. He had uncovered evidence while spying on the Nazis that Hitler's British intelligence network was alarmingly extensive. There was little chance of an British counter-occult program remaining hidden from Nazi spies. Churchill had no choice but to contact President Roosevelt and ask the Americans for help. Churchill arranged a meeting between the crippled President and Stein.

Roosevelt was skeptical but decided to leave no stone unturned in his efforts to defeat the Nazis. Less than a week after Walter Stein's meeting with Roosevelt, one of the President's most trusted advisors was placed at Stein's disposal. Stein was charged with the creation of an organization whose purpose was to monitor and analyze Nazi occult activity. Most importantly, the group was to devise countermeasures in the event that mundane firepower alone could not stop Hitler. This group became known among its participants as the Watch.

The Watch was an eclectic collection of individuals whose only common thread was power and influence. Stein was the group's unofficial leader. Roosevelt's advisor acted as the President's proxy. Eleven other members brought the total to thirteen. Most of the original thirteen were high-ranking military intelligence officers or scientists, the most notable exceptions being a Catholic archbishop and a powerful and respected U.S. senator. FDR kept the existence of the Watch completely secret, even from the American government and military, to avoid the inevitable public backlash in the event that government-sanctioned occult research was ever uncovered.

Despite the doubts of President Roosevelt, for more than a decade the Watch was consistently and horrifyingly successful. Only Stein was unshaken by the discoveries that threatened the sanity of the other members of the Watch. The conspirators used their authority and positions to fund and conduct research into the occult, gradually expanding to all areas of paranormal and psychic investigation. The accomplishments of the Watch's occult and psychic research allowed them to undertake several successful missions that kept the Axis occult power in check. The Watch's wartime operations included the assassinations, by both mundane and arcane means, of several leading Nazi occultists and the recovery of certain artifacts of mystical significance, including the famed Spear of Destiny. By 1945, the

SPEAR OF DESTINY

The Spear of Destiny is a vessel of mystical power that has been sought by tyrants and warlords for millennia. It is alleged to be the spear of the Roman centurion Longinus that pierced the side of Christ at the crucifixion. According to legend, whoever wields the spear holds the destiny of the world in his hands. Whether or not this is true, those who have claimed to hold the spear have met with great success. Otto the Great, Constantine, Napoleon, and many other conquerors and emperors have all laid claim to the spear, and the effects they have had on history are undeniable. The moment Adolf Hitler saw the spear, he was overcome by a glorious vision of his own future that left him a changed man. Driven by the belief that he would one day hold the spear and shape destiny, he vigorously pursued a path of occult knowledge and political power. When Hitler took control of Germany, he also took control of the spear and fulfilled his vision, securing his place as one of history's greatest villains. The spear stayed in Hitler's possession until recovered by the Watch, shortly before his death.

Watch had become an extremely powerful organization, yet it remained completely hidden from the world. That was to become the hallmark of the Watch and all its successors.

The end of World War II was in large part due to the success of the Watch's endeavors in destroying Nazi occult power. That ultimate success also meant the loss of the primary impetus for the Watch's activities. As usual with any powerful and motivated group, however, the Watch soon found another focus. From the debriefing of Axis scientists and review of German military records, the conspirators learned that accounts by Allied airmen of mysterious German experimental aircraft, dubbed "foo fighters," were erroneous. Axis command records revealed that Luftwaffe pilots reported identical craft but assumed them to be Allied experimental aircraft. This evidence, coupled with similar reports uncovered from accounts during World War I and earlier, convinced the Watch that the phenomenon of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) deserved attention and investigation. While continuing its occult and parapsychology research, the Watch redirected a large part of its manpower and resources toward the study of UFOs and their possible sources. It would not have long to wait for answers.

1940s: Discovery and Betrayal

By the late 1940s, UFO sightings had become relatively frequent. The U.S. government and military decided to institute new programs to discretely investigate these strange phenomena. Monitoring these investigations, unseen, was the Watch. In 1947, everything changed for the conspirators and the world in a series of events that would come to be known as the Roswell Incident.

The Roswell Incident

The Roswell Incident brought together a variety of actors, actions, motivations, and happenstance. As is usual with such pivotal events, the truth is obscure. The following represents Aegis Prime's best efforts at a proper chronology.

March 17, Cascade Mountain Range, Oregon: The Watch's parapsychology team gathers a group of psychics together at a secret research center. The team members are to test the range of their psychic abilities by attempting to contact a similar group in New England. The experiment yields spectacular but unexpected results. Contact is made, not with the target team, but instead with strange, unearthly minds. The contact lasts only thirteen seconds. Although they can make out little of what they mentally encountered, the psychics become certain of one thing: psychically active extraterrestrial life is present on Earth.

July 1, White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico: During the flight monitoring of a V-2 rocket fitted with advanced guidance systems, radar stations begin to track a UFO moving over the missile range erratically but under apparently intelligent control.

July 2, White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico: Under direct orders of Brigadier General Martin Scanlon, a 24-hour radar vigil is established to track the object. Through a contact in General Scanlon's staff, the Watch learns of the situation.

July 3, White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico: The Watch convenes to decide on a course of action. Two options arise from the discussion. Some members of the Watch believe that the crew of the UFO could be contacted telepathically, using knowledge gathered from the March 17 incident and sub-

sequent research. They propose that the Watch open a line of communication with the aliens and attempt a peaceful exchange of information. They are opposed by those members of the Watch overwhelmingly concerned with the danger posed by an unknown intelligent extraterrestrial race. This faction recommends shooting the craft down and analyzing the technology, so that when later communications are initiated, something is known of the aliens. After a long and heated debate, a narrow majority decides to attempt peaceful communications. The mission is designated Operation Dove. The research team of parapsychologists and psychics in the Cascade Mountains facility is enlisted. They establish a base of operations on an isolated mesa in the New Mexico desert.

In this instance, the lack of complete consensus within the Watch proves disastrous. Those who oppose Operation Dove, convinced of the folly of contacting extraterrestrials unprepared, form a second team. This rogue group secretly meets and initiates Operation Pigeon Shoot.

July 4, White Sands Proving Ground, New Mexico: While the Dove team waits on the mesa top for the UFO to reappear, Operation Pigeon Shoot readies itself in secret on the far side of the missile range. A V-2 rocket with the experimental guidance system is hastily loaded with high explosives.

At 21:18 (local time), radar contact is reestablished with the UFO that had been tracked over the previous four days. As the Dove psychics attempt to contact the crew of the craft mentally, Pigeon Shoot finalizes its preparations and awaits the launch command. A few minutes later, the alien craft appears to notice the psychics' efforts, stops, and hovers within sight of the mesa. Encouraged, the psychics redouble their efforts. Presented with the stationary target they hoped for, the Pigeon Shoot team launches the rocket.

Three events appear occur nearly simultaneously. First, the psychics succeed in contacting the alien minds in the UFO. Second, the V-2 rocket detonates on the hull of the ship. Third, an intense psychic assault devastates the assembled psychics.

The ship immediately begins accelerating away at an incredible speed, but it is fatally damaged. The craft touches ground once, gouging the earth and scattering debris over a ranch near Roswell. Several miles later, it crashes into a cliff.

July 5, Roswell, New Mexico: Prepared, in fact hoping, for this eventuality, Operation Pigeon Shoot springs into action. By dawn the next day, the final crash site is located and a recovery team is dispatched. The team loads the wreckage, including four alien bodies, onto trucks for transport to Roswell Army Air Base for temporary storage. At Roswell, the wreckage is packed away and loaded onto cargo planes for transport to Fort Worth Army Air Field. By nightfall the day after the crash, some of the wreckage arrives at Fort Worth. The Watch's influence in the military allows the Pigeon Shoot team to operate freely at Roswell and Fort Worth without fear of questioning. Although it is obvious to the soldiers there that something is afoot, no one asks any questions.

While Operation Pigeon Shoot secures the alien wreckage, Operation Dove attempts to salvage what it can of its team. Of the nine psychics who attempted to make contact, two die almost immediately of cardiac arrest and brain hemorrhaging. Another actually bursts into flame. A fourth slips into permanent catatonia. Three more soon develop debilitating psychoses. Only two survive with their sanity intact. After nearly a full day of damage control and debriefing, the Dove leaders realize they have been betrayed by other members of the Watch. Moving quickly, the remnants of Operation Dove pull themselves together and attempt to outmaneuver their new enemies. Using what military pull they can immediately muster, and aided by a little psychic sleight of hand, Dove manages to redirect one of the cargo planes heading for Fort Worth to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. There, a Dove team secures the cargo.

Unknown to either group, the chaos at Roswell hides the actions of yet another group of Watch members. These individuals, some of the most powerful of the founding members of the Watch, learn of the split in their group and are dismayed. They commandeer another of the cargo flights and take the shipment to Washington, DC. They make certain that the shipment they appropriate includes an alien corpse and an impressive amount of debris. The group, the plane, and the cargo mysteriously vanish. A very long time passes before any hint of this group's activities arise.

July 6, Roswell, New Mexico: By 03:00 the day after the crash, all Watch personnel have been evacuated from Roswell Air Base and White Sands Proving Ground, believing that all traces of the crash have been recovered. All are mistaken. While patrolling his property that morning, a local rancher, Mack Brazel, finds the trough and debris left when the craft touched down briefly before crashing. Later in the day, he calls the Roswell sheriff to report his find. The sheriff in turn calls Captain Jesse Marcel at Roswell Air Base, thinking the wreckage is the result of a military test.

Captain Marcel investigates the touchdown site, patrols the trench, and gathers some of the debris. He loads up his jeep with debris and returns to the base. The base commander, visions of promotion dancing in his head, issues a press release that the Army has recovered the wreckage of a UFO. This news reaches the Operation Dove team at Wright-Patterson AFB. A few well placed calls are made, and Captain Marcel and the debris are immediately summoned to Wright-Patterson. Part of the Operation Dove team returns to Roswell to oversee the recovery of the debris at the ranch.

July 7, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio: Under orders from Operation Dove, General Roger Ramey, the Commanding Officer of Wright-Patterson, holds a press conference in which the Roswell press release and its officers are portrayed as fools for having misidentified a weather balloon as a UFO. The embarrassed Captain Marcel is ordered to pose holding fragments of a weather balloon claimed to be the recovered

THE BIG PICTURE

The disintegration of the Watch sent shock waves throughout the U.S. government. The Watch's members were in such powerful positions in both the military and government that every aspect of American government was affected by the schism. Within two months of the Roswell incident, the military was divided into several branches. The division which had the greatest impact on the developing secret organizations of the National Defense Directorate and Aegis was between the Army and the Air Force. It is doubtful that the break-up of the Watch was entirely responsible for the division, but it certainly played a role in hastening the event. Shortly after the restructuring of the military, the National Security Act was born. The NSA created the CIA, which became indispensable to the burgeoning organizations as a source of intelligence data. The National Security Act also provided a portion of the military budget for secret projects and provided a cover for both the NDD and Aegis by allowing them to act covertly in the interest of "national security." These events established a tone of secrecy and deception within the government and military that Aegis and the NDD utilized extensively in the following decades.

debris. In Roswell, Operation Dove agents finish cleaning up the debris field and escort rancher Brazel to the Roswell base for three days of questioning.

July 8, Roswell, New Mexico: The debris collected from the ranch is sent to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

July 9, Roswell, New Mexico: Mack Brazel is released from custody at the Roswell base and soon appears on a local radio show to confess that the UFO story was a hoax and that he knew the wreckage was just a balloon all along. The combination of this "confession" and the Watch's pressure on other witnesses keeps the incident under control. The American public accepts the story and the Roswell crash remains all but forgotten for more than forty years . . .

Breaking the Watch

In the aftermath of Operation Pigeon Shoot's betrayal, the Watch splits into two distinct groups. The stated purpose of both groups is the protection of the human race from the predation of extraterrestrial and supernatural forces. Beyond that, the two organizations developed in diametrically opposed ways.

Aegis

The remnants of Operation Dove regrouped at Wright-Patterson AFB and set up a temporary center of operations. In an attempt to avoid a recurrence of the damage caused by Pigeon Shoot's treachery, a new organizational pattern was imposed.

The new structure, modeled after the secret mystical societies of Europe, included small independent groups or "cells." The original founding group became the "master" cell and selected members for the first generation of cells. Each offshoot cell had only a single contact to the "parent" cell, whose true identity remained unknown. These cells in turn recruited members into "child" cells as necessary, and the process continued until an extensive network was established. The cell structure minimized the information that could be revealed in the event hostile forces uncovered any particular cell. Were this to happen, only the child cell and its contact to the parent cell would be compromised. The new organization, which continues to this day, was given the name Aegis, after Zeus' magic shield in Greek mythology. The Operation Dove members who formed Aegis' original master cell came to be called Aegis Prime. To avoid panic and hindrance by the general populace, and to protect themselves from discovery by the NDD, strict secrecy was imposed on all activities.

The National Defense Directorate

While Aegis was establishing itself, the members of Operation Pigeon Shoot started construction on a secret underground base in the New Mexico desert. This base was to become the research center and headquarters of a covert project within the U.S. military, answerable to no government authority. This National Defense Directorate was unknown to all but its agents and a few highly placed officials, who ensured that any investigation was curtailed. The project was funded exclusively through the portion of the U.S. military budget assigned to covert or "black" projects, leading the project's secret sponsor in the U.S. Senate to refer to it as the Black Book. This name has been adopted by Aegis agents.

Aegis vs the NDD

Despite the original common purpose of Aegis and the NDD, the circumstances leading to the division of the Watch resulted in a great deal of animosity between the two organizations. This enmity was heightened as the focus of the NDD, in Aegis' eyes, slowly drifted from the protection of the human race and toward the acquisition of alien technology and knowledge by any means necessary. The NDD's military-industrial complex backers demanded concrete returns on their investments of time, power, and monies. To this end, the NDD began making deals with extraterrestrials, working with them rather than against them. Over the years, the alliance between the NDD and both the Greys and the Saurians grew very powerful. Aegis took a much harder stance on human-alien communication in response to the disastrous results of Operation Dove. Because of the close ties between the extraterrestrials and the NDD, Aegis came to view their former comrades as just as much of a threat as the aliens themselves.

THE 1950s: SMOKE AND MIRRORS

The 1950s were an important period of growth for Aegis. Strong ties within the American intelligence community allowed Aegis Prime to create a number of powerful first-generation cells. These cells were composed of high-ranking officers from various agencies, giving Aegis Prime access to a large pool of information and resources. The cells formed the backbone of the Aegis organization and established a strong foothold in the military and intelligence communities, in particular the newly created Air Force and Central Intelligence Agency.

THE MKULTRA PROJECT

During the CIA's creation, Aegis Prime made certain that operatives were placed in key positions throughout the new organization. The newly commissioned agency was to become Aegis' primary power base in the intelligence community, complementing the military resources gained through the similar "guidance" Aegis Prime had provided to the fledgling United States Air Force. The CIA soon became Aegis' single largest source of operatives and information. The free reign given to the new agency by the U.S. government allowed Aegis operatives to work under the auspices of the CIA without fear of investigation.

Capitalizing on Cold War paranoia and rumors that Communist powers were achieving incredible results in their research into "brainwashing" techniques, the CIA commenced research programs on mind control and human behavior modification. Aegis operatives monitored the programs, waiting to step in and take control of any that began to produce useful results. When such results occurred, the operatives would intercept and falsify reports to the CIA Inspector General so that only failure or very limited success would be revealed. In this manner, Aegis subverted any successful program's resources. Not all successful projects were "secured" by Aegis cells, however. Some projects lacked properly positioned agents; others were just too extreme in objective or methods. Still others were canceled without warning or explanation, or ended with the sudden disappearance or death of a key researcher. These mysterious events led Aegis to conclude that at least some of the CIA's secret mind-control projects ended up in the hands of the NDD.

The fear of Communist superiority in any area provided a smokescreen and apparent motive for a wide range of behavior modification projects conducted by the CIA. Early projects such as BLUEBIRD and ARTICHOKE concentrated on a few specific techniques, most commonly mind-altering drugs, hypnosis, and brain surgery. Although these projects resulted in some impressive successes, the most ambitious and successful project by far was MKULTRA.

The MKULTRA project was in fact several research efforts combined into one. Widely disparate subjects were being investigated, such as psychoactive drugs, hypnosis, sensory deprivation, cerebral implants, microwave radiation, extrasensory perception, and brainwashing through cult indoctrination. Most of these topics had been studied previously, and MKULTRA broke little new ground in each field independently. What made MKULTRA so successful was its study of the interaction of these disciplines. The experiments yielded the MKULTRA team two very impressive programs.

Through a combination of cerebral implants, psychoactive drugs, and microwave transmitters, MKULTRA scientists were able to create hidden split personalities. A test subject was completely unaware of his condition and exhibited normal, law-abiding behavior until the introduction of a triggering stimulus, often via radio or microwave transmission. The trigger induced a trancelike state in which the subject would carry out preprogrammed orders without hesitation or question. After the mission or task was completed, the subject would revert to a normal state, completely unaware of actions taken during the trance. These individuals were often used as covert assassins or couriers, unaware of their own roles and therefore nearly undetectable.

MKULTRA's experimentation involving parapsychology led another research group to develop a strong psychic warfare program. These parapsychologists took individuals who showed an aptitude for extrasensory perception and subjected them to a regimen of psychoactive drugs, hypnosis, sensory deprivation, and advanced meditation techniques. The result was a group of powerful psychics capable of impressive feats of psychic power in several disciplines. Unfortunately, the treatments often left the psychics addicts, insane, or worse.

The psychic warfare program, in particular, caught the attention of Aegis operatives within the CIA. They prepared to take control of the MKULTRA project by the usual means. Before this power shift could be fully realized, however, rumors of the MKULTRA project and specifically the psychic program found their way to the public and the news media. Public outrage caused a Congressional investigation during which the CIA downplayed the success of the program and emphasized that the subjects were all volunteers, which was not, in many cases, true. The investigation caused the official end of the MKULTRA project in 1963. As was often the case, however, the project lived on, hidden from the public and exempt from congressional inquires or other governmental accounting. The MKULTRA project remains to this day wholly under Aegis control.

Project BLUEBOOK and Project MOONDUST

As more and more Americans reported UFO sightings in the early 1950s, the military's official denial of the phenomenon became increasingly suspect. In fact, the categorical denials quickly became as much a cause of speculation as the origin of the UFOs. In 1952, the Air Force gave in to the public pressure to "do something" about UFOs and created Project BLUEBOOK, an official Air Force investigation into UFO sightings. Given its subject matter, BLUEBOOK soon came under the influence of Aegis. It was Aegis' intention to use BLUEBOOK as a smoke screen for Aegis operations and as a source for public disinformation.

To reduce the possibility of a link being discovered between the project and Aegis, the BLUEBOOK staff contained no Aegis operatives. BLUEBOOK was a legitimate and official Air Force project, although Aegis made certain that the personnel chosen for the project were predisposed toward skepticism of the phenomenon.

The primary instrument of Aegis' control over BLUEBOOK was another Air Force project completely hidden from the public eye, Project MOONDUST. Project MOONDUST was created in 1953 and charged with "the retrieval and exploitation of crashed foreign spacecraft." Within top military circles, MOONDUST's stated purpose was the recovery and examination of downed Soviet and Eastern Bloc spacecraft and satellites, but the MOONDUST charter clearly made it responsible for the recovery of extraterrestrial spacecraft as well. In this

UFO PROJECTS

Following the Roswell incident in 1947, the government initiated a series of projects to determine the validity of UFO sightings and reported alien encounters across the country. Though the projects were legitimate, both Aegis and the NDD controlled or maintained informants within them. In December 1947, one such endeavor, Project SIGN, was created by the Air Force. By the summer of 1948, SIGN determined that the technology responsible for UFOs was extraterrestrial in origin. In February 1949, Aegis became concerned with the openness of Project SIGN. The program was taken over and renamed Project GRUDGE. The research done by GRUDGE was downgraded in priority and eventually ended in December 1949. The final report stated that no conclusive evidence indicated the existence of alien life. The government received flak over its abrupt change of view, so a new research program was begun.

Created by the Air Force, Project BLUEBOOK was to be the government's official position on UFOs. It reached the same conclusion as Project GRUDGE. Yet another of the government's investigations was Project SIGMA, created in 1948. SIGMA's purpose was to establish communications with alien life. Despite the mandate of the Freedom of Information Act, the government has not confirmed SIGMA's existence or success. Aegis was able to learn that SIGMA was at least in part successful, but more detailed inquiries were stymied by suspected NDD counteragents.

In all, many of the projects undertaken during the late 1940s and 1950s served Aegis and the NDD well by providing easy access to information and cover for investigations. As a result of their mutual benefit, neither organization fought too strenuously against infiltration by the other in these projects. Serious conflict between the two groups risked exposing both and destroying the information source.

NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON AERIAL PHENOMENA

As might be expected, there were those who were not convinced by BLUEBOOK's investigations and who saw the final BLUEBOOK report as the disinformation it was. Many of these people investigated UFOs and related phenomena on their own, attempting to uncover the truth and form their own conclusions. The most dangerous of these truth-seekers formed civilian investigative groups to share information and resources. Fortunately for Aegis, these groups were often eager to recruit new members. As a result, Aegis cells had little trouble infiltrating the organizations, subverting what information they managed to uncover and guaranteeing that they never got too close to important information. Many of these groups were much more interested in finding evidence to support their pet theories than in conducting serious investigations. This made them ideal mouthpieces for Aegis lies and further degraded the credibility of all such organizations.

One civilian organization stood apart from the majority. This group could not be easily dismissed, given the credibility of its membership. In 1956, Navy physicist Thomas Brown founded the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena (NICAP), a UFO and related events study group. Although NICAP was a civilian organization and contained many well known civilian UFOlogists, a disturbingly large number of members were retired Air Force and CIA personnel. The Aegis operatives who were monitoring the group became acutely aware that many of the NICAP members had secret agendas. The agents learned that some NICAP members were reporting back to groups within the CIA and other intelligence community organizations. Other members seemed to be working for an organization or organizations that Aegis could not identify. Due to the extent of NICAP's infiltration by agents from outside organizations with unknown objectives, little of the data it managed to collect can be trusted. Also, Aegis' inability to identify all of the organizations operating within NICAP made Aegis Prime more paranoid than ever.

role, it was exploited heavily by Aegis and was staffed almost exclusively by Aegis personnel. All UFO reports were filtered through Project MOONDUST before transmission to Project BLUEBOOK, and only those reports deemed of little significance or validity were passed on.

At the end of its study, Project BLUEBOOK concluded that there was in fact no substantial evidence to support claims that UFOs were anything but misidentified terrestrial craft, weather phenomena, or hallucinations. The project's report was widely accepted by the populace and proved quite effective at undermining the credibility of UFO reports that followed.

The Majestic 12 Document

During the 1950s, Aegis often uncovered evidence that secret organizations other than the NDD were at work within the U.S. government. The most puzzling document discovered by a cell within the CIA described the creation of a secret organization charged with investigating UFOs and alien phenomena in response to a "flying saucer" crash near Roswell, New Mexico in 1947. The document detailed that group's members, which included high-level government and military officials and respected scientists, and labeled the group "The Majestic 12." The document, while superficially convincing, was plagued with errors that undermined its credibility. To those familiar with the actual events at Roswell, it was obviously a work of disinformation. Still, the events described in the MJ-12 document were uncomfortably close to the truth, and the composition of the fictitious MJ-12 was reasonably close to that of the Watch. Aegis believed that either the writers of the document knew at least partially what really had happened at Roswell or they were being fed information by someone who did. But questions remained: who wrote the document, and what were their intentions? Unable to determine if the document represented a security leak from Aegis or NDD turncoats, or simply a sophisticated misinformation campaign, Aegis destroyed the MJ-12 document and waited. It observed no reaction and the document did not immediately reappear. Aegis Prime grew even more paranoid.

The Ranch

After the MJ-12 incident, Aegis Prime reevaluated its security measures. Two key aspects of the organization were deemed insecure: Aegis' base of operations at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and its current procedures for distributing information. Wright-Patterson had attracted too much attention in recent years, resulting in rumors that "Hangar 18" contained alien technology and extraterrestrial bodies. The rumors were correct, but the hangar number was wrong. Wright-Pat was just too close to population centers for proper security. A new base was needed, far from prying eyes.

The methods Aegis used for distributing information between cells was the other chink in Aegis' armor. The procedures involved passing encrypted files physically between parent and child cells. This was slow and relatively insecure, and required frequent contact between cells. Aegis needed another way, and new developments in technology provided it.

Both problems were addressed in a single, aggressive plan. Aegis constructed a secret military base, under the auspices of the Air Force, on the Nellis Bombing and Gunnery Range in Nevada. The Nellis Gunnery Range is a massive military base, roughly the size of Connecticut, used by the Air Force for live-fire tests and training missions. The detonation of munitions was not only accepted but expected on the base. Aegis could

deal with intruders and trespassing aircraft (terrestrial and otherwise) with whatever force was deemed necessary and blame training and testing operations for the gunfire and explosions.

The base was built on the shores of Groom Dry Lake and was designated a no-fly zone. On early flight maps, the no-fly zone was marked Area 51, which became one of the base's many nicknames. Others included Dreamland, S-4, and the Groom Dry Lake Test Facility, but the base was given no official name or designation. Indeed, the military has no records of the base, and most officers who are aware of its existence are members of Aegis or at least sympathetic to its goals. The majority of Aegis operatives simply call it the Ranch.

To alleviate the security problem inherent in distributing information through human connections, a massive computer system and database was constructed at the Ranch. This computer network, dubbed HERMES, became the repository for information gained through cell investigations and research. Cells no longer needed to contact each other simply to relay information. HERMES also gave a cell a means of alerting Aegis Prime if its parent cell was neutralized, preventing the cell from being completely cut off. Each cell's connection to the HERMES network was provided by computer terminals specially manufactured at the Ranch for Aegis cells. The main HERMES system was installed and went online before the base was completed.

NEWS FROM THE RANCH

Despite the best efforts of Aegis, the Ranch became the center of a considerable amount of unwanted publicity. At first, the only threats to base security were small groups of fringe UFOlogists and military aircraft buffs hoping to see evidence of unconventional aircraft. These groups were easily dealt with by Ranch security and were considered a tolerable nuisance. Unfortunately, the mystery of the Groom Dry Lake facility brought more attention, and with it came more competent and vocal investigators. Eventually, tours and sightseeing trips began to be offered by the growing local population of base watchers, increasing unauthorized traffic on the borders of the base to intolerable levels. Aegis Prime was forced to take action when the activity surrounding the base began to attract camera crews and journalists from mainstream news media. In an attempt to close off areas commonly used by those wishing to view the base, the Air Force seized nearly 4,000 acres of land surrounding the Ranch.

In time, the Ranch became a large research and administrative facility housing a myriad of Aegis research projects. Several Aegis cells are based there, though only the most senior operatives know who else on the facility is an operative. The vast majority of researchers and workers at the Ranch are civilians and Air Force personnel unaware of the base's true purpose or commanders. The researchers work on small aspects of a project and never see its full extent. Those who do are either recruited into the cell supervising the project or simply "removed."

The most prominent projects at the Ranch involve captured alien spacecraft. Most of the long-term research centers around reverse-engineering extraterrestrial craft in order to exploit the alien technology. The most successful projects to date in this area are a series of interceptors, code-named Aurora. Over time, the Aurora series has incorporated a fantastic array of the best of terrestrial aerospace technology, combined with secrets learned from the aliens. The latest, Aurora III, is one of the few craft at Aegis' disposal that has a respectable success rate for pursuing and overtaking alien craft. Still, less than a half-dozen Auroras are service-ready at any one time, and securing the special breed of pilots necessary for these planes is difficult.

1960s: THE HIGHEST LEVEL

By the early sixties, Aegis had infiltrated many aspects of the government and was developing cells in the private sector as well. Aegis had done a remarkable job of burying itself within layers of government programs. The combination of the cell structure and the HERMES network thoroughly concealed Aegis from public and government eyes. Even so, an incident with global repercussions in 1963 threatened to destroy years of careful planning and patient intrigue.

Through a routine illicit wiretap in the White House, President John F. Kennedy discovered that one of his own Secret Service bodyguards was an agent of a secret society called Aegis. After further surveillance by his own men, Kennedy discovered that his Secret Service agents were under the orders of this organization and were engaging in covert actions for the agency. President Kennedy confronted one of the agents and threatened him with a full Congressional investigation and imminent exposure. In exchange for his silence, Kennedy demanded that the agents make themselves available to him at any time to use as his personal covert operations team.

The Secret Service Aegis cell was caught completely off-guard. It contacted its parent cell and waited for instructions. The horrible answer was swift in coming. The parent cell's mandate came directly from Aegis Prime: Kennedy must be eliminated. It would happen during his upcoming visit to Dallas.

Unknown to the Secret Service cell or Aegis Prime, one of the cell members was a double agent working for the NDD. While Aegis was plotting the assassination, the double agent apprised the NDD of the situation. The Directorate seized the moment and approached President Kennedy with a counter-proposition. The NDD offered Kennedy protection from Aegis, and a group of agents to use as he saw fit, in exchange for Kennedy's assurance that any investigation into the NDD's involvement with the government would be silenced. Kennedy accepted the deal.

The Aegis cell recruited Lee Harvey Oswald, one of MKULTRA's success stories, for the dirty work. It supplied him with details of the President's motorcade route and the buildings along the route whose security would be "overlooked" by the Secret Service. Unknown to Oswald, the cell also positioned two psychics in the crowd outside the book depository as back-up. Both psychics had powerful telekinetic abilities and were to ensure that once Oswald's bullets hit, President Kennedy would be fatally wounded.

As the President's motorcade came into view, Oswald prepared to take the shot. Then he heard someone in the building coming toward him. Oswald hastily fired twice before turning toward the door. An NDD agent burst into the room, but before he could bring his weapon to bear, Oswald fired on him. The agent was wearing a bulletproof vest but was stunned by the impact of the bullets long enough for Oswald to escape. The Directorate immediately tipped off the police, giving Oswald's description and general location. Oswald was captured within minutes.

Outside, one of Oswald's shots hit the President but was off-target. The Aegis psychics took over, bouncing the bullet through several vital organs. The damage was critical but most likely not fatal. Yet Oswald's attack was not the only one directed at the President at that instant. From a nearby grassy knoll, another assassin simultaneously shot the President, with a quiet weapon powerful enough to blow Kennedy's head off. Although Aegis could not take credit, Kennedy had indeed been assassinated.

Aegis learned two extremely important lessons from the episode. First, it was obvious that the NDD had known about the plan beforehand. This increased Aegis Prime's already excessive paranoia. Second, Aegis Prime realized that it was not solely responsible for the Kennedy assassination. This again raised suspicions in Aegis of another secret, unidentified conspiracy. The fact that the third party had acted in a way helpful to Aegis did not dampen Aegis Prime's concerns about the other group's motives. Aegis learned little more at the time despite intensive investigation, and in the end Aegis simply counted the mission as an uneasy victory.

1980s: SPACE AND SPECTERS

The 1980s saw Aegis' focus divided between alien interest in near orbit and the local areas of space, as well as a resurfacing of a problem long thought buried.

The Challenger

The success of the 1960s and 1970s in the area of space exploration had an amazing impact not only on all humanity but also, perhaps even more so, on the extraterrestrials operating on Earth. For reasons that Aegis could only speculate on, the Saurians were particularly troubled by the recent push into space. The Saurians seemed to fear most the development of a reusable space shuttle.

In February 1986, Aegis learned that the Saurians planned to sabotage the space program. Aegis discovered that the NDD had provided the Saurians with details about the route that the solid rocket boosters would travel. In exchange, the Directorate received further technology necessary to build spacecraft of their own. Interestingly, Aegis also learned that knowledge of the principles behind the Saurian technology was not part of the deal. Thus, the NDD remained dependent on the Saurians.

While the solid rocket boosters were on route to Cape Canaveral in Florida, a team of three Saurians masquerading as humans (the infamous Men in Black) replaced the security team and sabotaged the rockets. On January 28, 1986, the Space Shuttle *Challenger* exploded just moments after launch. The results were greater than the Saurians could have hoped for. Not only was a reusable shuttle destroyed, but the graphic horror of the tragedy, transmitted into nearly every American home, shattered the public's faith in space exploration and NASA's space program in general. The act of Saurian terrorism revealed to Aegis the depth of NASA's vulnerability and resulted in an increase in the number of NASA cells.

MJ-12 Resurfaces

One year after the *Challenger* tragedy, Aegis found itself facing more problems from outside forces. In 1987, the MJ-12 document that Aegis had buried so long ago resurfaced in the hands of two crusaders for "the right to know the truth about aliens." Aegis was unable to discover where the document had come from or how and why anyone would send it to these two UFOlogists. The MJ-12 document supported the accounts of witnesses from Roswell who had begun coming forward with their stories, but until then the appearance of the document had been paid little attention. This newfound credibility, however, actually aided Aegis, as it supported a document that was a work of disinformation.

The widespread acceptance of the MJ-12 document upon its release revealed that more and more people were willing to believe in the existence of UFOs. In fact, since the early 1970s, a radical "New Age" movement had been slowly gaining popularity. An integral part of the New Agers' doctrine was the belief that aliens were cosmic "space brothers" who wished to help humanity along the path to its own "spiritual awakening." Aegis was suddenly forced to deal with a public intrigued by extraterrestrials and willing to accept evidence of alien life. This mindset made Aegis' cover-up operations more difficult. Fortunately, many UFO enthusiasts believed the MJ-12 document, the New Agers, or both. This ensured that their belief in phenomena that were real was based on details that were lies.

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Economic chaos, pollution, severe climate changes, and ethnic unrest conspired to bring misery to much of the world in the build-up to the new millennium. Pollution and the devastation of vast areas of the Earth's rainforests caused severe climatic changes. Droughts and brutal forest fires raged out of control in a time that would be known in the future as the "Great Burning." Storms and hurricanes grew in intensity, inflicting severe damage on many countries. The public was convinced that the environment had been harmed beyond repair by mankind's industrialization, a notion fueled by the ecologically concerned Saurian infiltrators.

Tensions resulted in the fall of the Soviet Union and the first Gulf War. Rumors circulated in the conspiracy-hysterical media that Saddam Hussein had been replaced by aliens, hiding what would become termed as "weapons of mass destruction" in preparation for invasion. Aegis investigated and discovered that many of the commanding officers dictating the orders in the Gulf on behalf of the United States were working for the NDD. Aegis was unable to intervene at such a delicate time, however, fearing the repercussions of a battle in such a media-centered conflict. Underground conspiracy papers have continued to report their theories, but most have been ridiculed.

THE GULF WAR II

With the capture of the "real" Saddam in December 2003, the government was quick to whisk this confused shell of a man away from media attention. Could the conspiracy theorists have been right? A few mumbled phrases from the former dictator have been recorded as "clone," "reptiles," and "invasion."

Millennium fever almost brought the world to a standstill as the rumors of computer viruses, apocalyptic prophecies, spiritual awakening, and religious fervor resulted in an anticlimax. With the discovery of water on the moon by the *Athena* probe and later on Mars by the Mars Global Surveyor, the completion of the HAARP array (the center of many conspiracy theories for mass mind control), the first human embryonic cloning, and rising global tensions, anything could have happened as the clocks turned over to 2000.

Many incidents occurred that were headline news for a short time, before humanity and its brief attention span found something new to focus on. It was a time of uncertainty and fear. In addition to the weak global economy, social unrest, weather disasters, and general lack of trust in the government and all in power, the early years of the new millennium were marked with a rise in superstition. People, desperate in the harsh and turbulent times around them, turned to the occult and spiritual beliefs for comfort and guidance. Supernatural events seemed to be more common during this time than any since the dark ages. Tales of bogeymen who preyed on humans were common, often confirmed by police reports. Aegis struggled to keep control of these reports for fear of public panic. To many, it seemed as if an apocalyptic event was at hand.

Apocalyptic events did occur, though to Aegis' surprise, these were not the result of supernatural or extraterrestrial means. With the horrific attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States' government was restructured in one of the most dramatic reshuffles in history. Finally, the disparate government agencies were working together in a "war on terror." Both Aegis and the NDD had to adjust quickly to these changes, as the Homeland Security Act restructured their levels of infiltration.

The subsequent germ warfare scares, however, *were* of extraterrestrial origin. The anthrax threat in the U.S. and later the SARS outbreak in Asia were traced to Grey activities. Aegis has long hypothesized that the Greys are working on a plague-like virus that will eradicate the human race, though many in Aegis consider this scaremongering.

More recently, suspected Saurian-inspired NDD influence within the various levels of the U.S. space program has resulted in headline news. The conspirators appear greatly concerned over the human incursion into space embodied by the International Space Station. In 2003, the Space Shuttle *Columbia* was sabotaged after a crew member reported finding additional modular apparatus on the station that were not specified in the schematics. The disaster brought the space program to a standstill, delaying work on the space station for a time.

Later, as the European Space Agency's Mars Express spacecraft approached the red planet carrying the *Beagle 2* landing probe, the NDD acted once again in a seemingly desperate manner. Landing sites for the U.S. probes were governed by infiltrators within the project, ensuring the probes landed in specific places. *Beagle 2*, being part of a European project, had defined a different landing site, which brought it to an area the NDD and its alien allies did not want revealed. At the last minute, the probe was destroyed remotely – the British scientists considered it a technical malfunction. The U.S. missions continued in their pre-approved patterns (both orbital and landing), sending back reports of water traces that would occupy NASA scientists for years.

AEGIS STATUS QUO

Along side a multifaceted and growing central bureaucracy maintained by Aegis Prime, the bulk of Aegis retains the cell structure it assumed when it was first created. The individual cells are largely independent and autonomous but are able to share information easily via the ever-evolving and expanding HERMES computer system. By maintaining a loose connection with its parent cell, each cell ensures that its heavy reliance on HERMES does not become a true vulnerability.

Because of the autonomy granted by Aegis Prime, each cell is free to interpret and carry out the ultimate goals of the organization as it sees fit. This is not to say that Aegis Prime will not step in if a cell goes out of control. For the most part, a cell's missions are initiated by its own needs and plans. This means cells are expected to keep a close watch on events in their local areas and commence investigations as the information gathered dictates. On infrequent occasions, the parent cell or Aegis Prime will mandate a mission. Cells are obligated to fulfill such mandates. Rogue cells are dealt with harshly.

Cells are free to create their own child cells in order to be more effective. A parent cell may receive a request for aid from the child cell. The parent operatives are expected, but not obligated, to respond.

The primary goal currently mandated by Aegis Prime is the conclusive determination of the true goals and motivations of the various alien races currently operating on Earth. Aegis Prime ultimately hopes to determine how much of a threat these races pose to the continued prosperity of the human race. Aegis' secondary objective is to learn as much as possible about the aliens' physiology, technology, and psychology and to develop weapons capable of exploiting any weaknesses discovered. In the event that the alien threat cannot be neutralized peacefully, Aegis wants an immediate and effective strike-force capacity. All Aegis cells have standing orders when investigating aliens. If a clear level of threat or motivation cannot be estimated, the cell is to assume a hostile intent and neutralize, by any and all means, the alien presence.

Aegis sees the supernatural as a relatively minor menace. Indeed, it is seen as a potential weapon to be exploited in the fight against the aliens. With regard to supernatural manifestations, Aegis Prime has made it clear that emphasis should be placed on investigation and research, rather than eradication.

THE NDD STATUS QUO

Aegis knows that the NDD operates from a central underground base in the mountains near Dulce, New Mexico (just as the NDD know some of the specifics about the Ranch). The base provides storage for most of its equipment and acquired alien technology, as well as housing for a majority of its agents. Unlike Aegis cells, NDD operatives are strictly controlled by the commanders at Dulce. All operation teams live on the base.

RATIONALIZING THE REAL WORLD

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 cannot be ignored, especially in a game whose focus is the U.S. government. The repercussions changed the structure of the government in one of the most radical shuffles in history. These newly structured departments are the basis of the Professions provided in **Chapter Two: Personnel**. Some Chroniclers may feel uncomfortable addressing the events of September 11 and other terrorist attacks. That is understandable. If this is the case, it is best to consider the motivation behind these events as purely mundane, with no paranormal rationale behind them. Aegis and the NDD were both taken by surprise by these attacks and have subsequently undergone dramatic modifications to their intelligence gathering and infiltration to ensure such an attack is not missed in the future. Other incidents, while not as influential on the conspiracies, can be treated similarly.

Conspiracy X is a game of conspiracies, however, and every horrific event spawns a mass of theories that may be used by Chroniclers who feel ready to rationalize such incidents in their game. Although some suggestions are provided below, the "gaming" of recent history is not intended to belittle these events or those involved and affected. Rather than providing a complete "metaplot" for the game, the sampling of ideas below can be used or discarded on an individual basis depending upon the Chronicler.

Oklahoma City Bombing: On April 19, 1995, a bomb was detonated at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people, including 19 children. The terrorist responsible, Timothy McVeigh, was caught just ninety minutes later on firearms charges. A radical militant and alleged neo-Nazi, McVeigh was charged and convicted, and executed six years later. Many conspiracy theories exist surrounding the bombing. Most question why children were present in a government building, why so many people were there at 9 a.m., and how McVeigh was caught so quickly. Many consider McVeigh a patsy, being caught almost as quickly as Oswald. In *Conspiracy X* this could be true. The bombing may have been an attack by Aegis, who discovered a hive of alien-human hybrids, or metahumans.

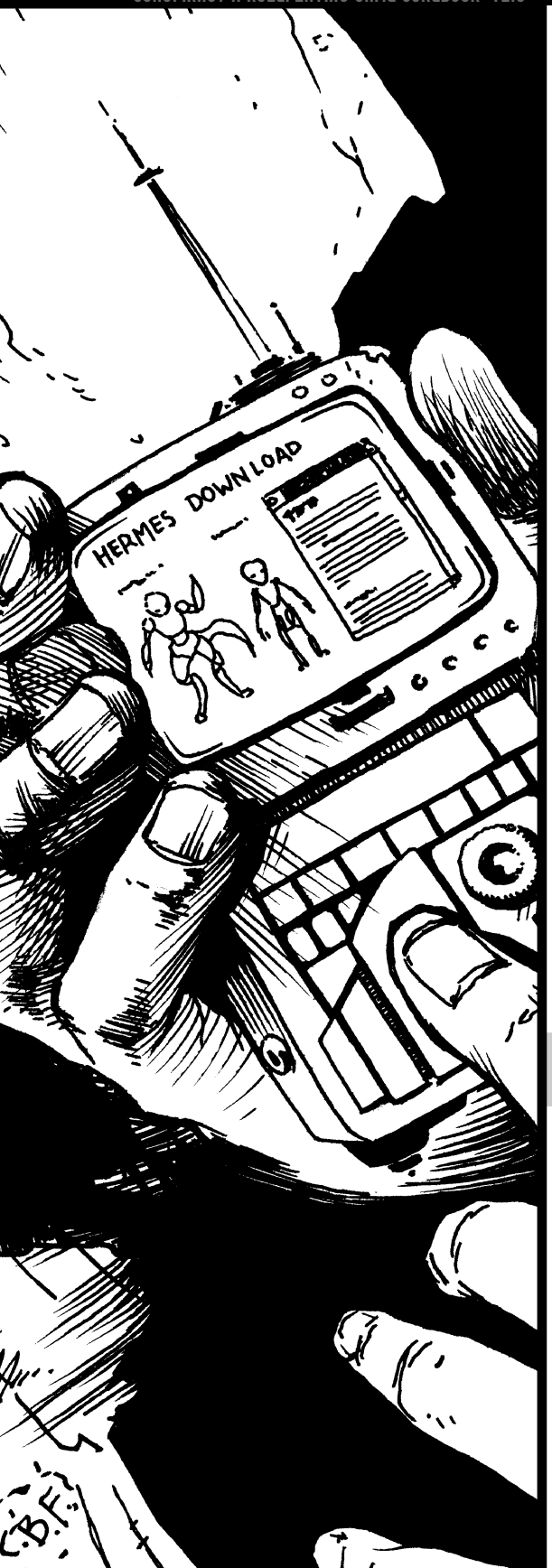
George W. Bush: Heavily criticized, his accession to power provoked great debate and conspiracy theories. With just 21% of the electorate behind him, the election was reduced to recount and legal challenges. Chroniclers may wish to include this in their history. Was Bush a Saurian MiB, or just a puppet placed into power by either the NDD or Aegis and controlled by powerful psychics? If he was a Saurian or somehow beholden to the Saurians, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in the second Gulf War could be seen as an effort to root out a renegade faction of lizard aliens impervious to small-scale tactical assault. Perhaps the covert and commando operations before and after the war were not solely focused on terrestrial threats.

The World Trade Center Attack: It should be noted that September 11 was not the first attack on the WTC. In 1993, a bomb was detonated in an attempt to topple one of the towers. The attacker(s) also planned to release a cloud of cyanide gas. The events of that day are well known but remain surrounded by many conflicting stories and theories. Did the government know about the attack in advance and choose to do nothing to rationalize military action? If directed in that area, surely human or alien psychics would have known something was coming. Perhaps at the time, the Clinton administration was not comfortable with psychic phenomena or their discovery of the government's capacities in the area, or perhaps (as was and is the case) Aegis and the NDD felt the new President could not be trusted with such secrets.

Why the WTC? It could be that the buildings themselves were part of HERMES' communications hub, and that the enemies of Aegis were aware of this and tried to cripple their network. It could be that the attack was as it occurred in reality, an assault on the U.S., capitalism, and everything the towers represented. If so, this could mean that Osama bin Laden had external motivation. Was he corrupted, a religious extremist prophet with premonitory powers that enabled him to accomplish the horrific deed? Or was he a Void, unable to be located by Aegis or NDD psychics, with a team of corrupted lieutenants using him as a puppet figurehead?

Not only was the WTC attacked that fateful day, the Pentagon was also a target. The Pentagon is an obvious choice for attack in any conspiracy. Home of the government's most secret activities, theorists have long claimed that the Pentagon houses the bodies of the Greys recovered at Roswell and is home to many occult rituals due to its shape. Could it be that Osama's plans were discovered by Aegis or the NDD and that a ritual was staged to protect the country, similar to the legendary Lammas Night ritual that changed the war in Europe in 1941? If so, was it a retaliatory attack, or a pre-emptive strike?

Whatever the reason or motivation behind the attack, New York City has been scarred on a paranormal level. Ground Zero is a powerful Locus, the shape of the towers visible to those with the power to see manifestations of Seepage. It will take decades, if ever, before the city recovers and paranormal forces quiet.



Only individual spies and intelligence agents networked around the country are not. Even these operatives are tightly controlled and tracked; no one acts independently in the NDD.

Whereas Aegis prefers to recruit influential operatives into cells and allow them the freedom to work as they see fit, NDD operatives are all the equivalent of foot soldiers. The agents know very little of what the organization as a whole is doing and for the most part blindly follow orders they receive from Dulce. This structure inhibits a flexible response to quickly evolving situations but ensures that the integrity of the operation as a whole cannot be jeopardized by any agent.

The NDD's greatest strength lies in the pacts it has made with extraterrestrials, and the information and technology gained as a result. The NDD has developed a hypersonic troop transport vessel built from technology derived from the Saurian systems. The transports, designated "Black Manta," are stealth aircraft capable of vertical take-off and landing. The NDD also has its own high performance interceptor, known only as the TD-121. Aegis managed to steal some of the NDD's propulsion technology and combined it with other alien-derived devices to create the TD-121's only effective rival, the Aurora III.

Aegis has learned that the NDD has become so entwined with the Saurians that groups of Saurian agents, referred to as Men in Black, have been formed. These agents are believed to be altered to look human and always work in groups of three. Further, they possess superhuman strength and agility and usually carry Saurian technology.

The Directorate also has made several treaties with the Greys. These pacts generally involve the NDD abducting humans and exchanging them for Grey psychic aid. The combination of Grey mind-control abilities and NDD cunning and firepower creates a lethal counterforce to Aegis operations.

In at least two respects, Aegis has the upper hand over the NDD. Aegis has managed to learn far more about Atlantean technology than the NDD has. Although Aegis is not certain why this is so, it has seized and exploited the opportunity. In addition, Aegis' knowledge and abilities in the realm of psychic and supernatural phenomena are far superior to those of the NDD, despite its alliance with the Greys.

THE HERMES SYSTEM

HERMES is the Aegis code name for its secure communications network and database system. The system was built on the cutting edge of technology, and through Aegis' exceptional contacts in the defense industry and the resources it can muster, it has remained years ahead of consumer and even conventional military capabilities. Primarily developed to aid in the dissemination of information among cells, the system has grown to be a repository of knowledge for Aegis and includes advanced communications capabilities and high performance graphical interfaces. In recent years, the system has been supplemented by an almost-intelligent database search and retrieval system, allowing agents to quickly scan, cross-reference, and collate information. Through HERMES, agents can access any information on any subject that Aegis has observed or studied. To maintain and expand the database, agents are required to log any information they discover.

Accessible only through dedicated hardware features and software protocols imbedded in each agent's link, HERMES security is continually upgraded. To date, no breaches have been reported or suspected.

In the early days, the computer-like terminals required retinal and voice scans to activate. These terminals were coded with an expert system that monitored a user's "style" for consistency. Such protections have been upgraded many times; links are superseded every couple of years, incorporating the latest in personal electronics equipment. Every agent is now issued a link integrated into a stylish piece of personal equipment. They are intentionally designed to appear inconspicuous under normal scrutiny, to operate as normal when not properly activated, and to self-destruct if tampered with. Instead of retinal scans, the devices use an advanced thermal scan to identify the blood-vessel patterns in the user's hand. With rapidly advancing technology, Aegis agents can decide the form their link will take, but most take the form of a high-end PDA/mobile phones, with color screens, Internet access, and digital recording audio and visual capabilities.

Through their links, agents can access the HERMES database, send voice, digital images, and data messages to other agents in their cell, and broadcast information to all of Aegis. When activated, the device shows a high-resolution color display for text or graphics. Messages or reports can be entered in a number of different ways. This allows the links to be used in public without attracting undue attention. An artificial intelligence program assembles answers to HERMES queries as they are posed, incorporating whatever text and graphical data the AI considers appropriate, and, in many cases, links to related topics are suggested. Each time an agent asks a particular question, he may receive a different answer, because the system synthesizes its response based upon its continuously updated database and the context of the query. For old-timers, computer-style workstations are available for installation at the cell's base.

One thing an agent cannot do, directly or indirectly, is contact other Aegis cells, as this would constitute a violation of the cell system. HERMES also will not, under any circumstances, divulge which individual or cell was the ultimate source of any particular data. Finally, HERMES will never report on the nature of its own security. Although everyone indoctrinated into Aegis is taught that the system is absolutely secure, these security measures are not detailed. Somewhere the actual database must exist, and some high-ranking Aegis directors who can access all of it, but if this is the case, it is one of the secrets Aegis keeps from its agents. Because of the agents' level of access to this extensive and highly sensitive information, Aegis spares no expense on security. The system must never be compromised.

The HERMES links are the one and only piece of equipment that Aegis provides to its agents. When a new cell is created, new links must be ordered by the founder. These devices arrive inconspicuously by express mail, and appear as top of the line but regularly available consumer products. Indeed, that is exactly what they are, until activated. The initial activation consists of binding each link to an agent; although any agent can use any unactivated link, each link can go through the binding procedure only once. This procedure requires the presence of both the recruiter and the new agent. After certain input codes are entered by the recruiter, the unit records the new agent's thermal scan and other identifying features, and logs him on to the system as a valid HERMES user. By the nature of this protocol, there can only be as many valid users as there have been links issued.

Losing a link is a "bad thing." Lost links are to be reported immediately and their signals are shunted to one of the false HERMES networks. These networks appear to provide much of the same information that HERMES does, but data is subtly altered or omitted, making it worthless. If used, a security team or nearby cell is dispatched to retrieve them. At any given moment, a self-destruct code may be implemented, either by a human agent or by HERMES' near AI. The linkless agent is subjected to intensive security questioning and monitoring. If the security forces are satisfied with their investigation, the agent receives a new link in a few weeks. There is much speculation as to the reason for this delay, for as far as anyone can tell, there is no reason for it.

AEGIS SPECIAL RESOURCES

The existence of the following assets is unknown by most Aegis operatives. Those who are privy to these secrets either have access to the technology, or very senior members of the conspiracy. Such personnel have been instructed to reveal as little as possible about these items to their fellow operatives. Compartmentalization of knowledge is standard practice for clandestine organizations and is not questioned by those "not in the know."

ALIEN TECHNOLOGY

Certain operatives have access to alien technology as a restricted resource. The following items are generally available to these operatives. Spending the RP cost listed grants the operative permanent assignment of the item in question.

ACCESS TO ALIEN TECHNOLOGY

The Chronicler, at his discretion, may add or remove items from the list as necessary to preserve game balance and the continuity of the game world. For example, if a Chronicler has decided that in his game world no one has ever managed to capture Saurian technology, he may make those items unavailable. Likewise, if he decides that another alien race of his own design is operating on Earth, he may include items of technology from that race.

USE OF ALIEN TECHNOLOGY

If alien items are secured from Aegis projects or other specialized contacts, the knowledge concerning their use and capacities is assumed to be imparted to the agent, although the exact skills may or may not be taught. The Chronicler may omit certain information or provide false information as desired. Alien items are highly experimental and temperamental. Skilled research and extensive study are necessary to decipher even the most basic abilities and components. The best efforts may not reveal all necessary information. Indeed, one of the reasons Aegis Prime allows field use of captured technology is for testing. Of course, the incomplete nature of conveyed information may not be revealed to the operative. Remember, paranoia runs rampant in the *Conspiracy X* world.

Field Generators
18 RP for 1 item

These defensive devices are built into the harnesses worn as clothing by alien soldiers. These generators are very rare and have been recovered only from UFO wreckage and secret bases. The field generator is capable of projecting a defensive energy shield or an antigravity effect (see p. 244).

Particle Accelerator Rifle
20 RP for 1 item

This weapon is one of the few pieces of alien technology that is easily used when recovered. The PA rifle is a devastating heavy weapon that is only slightly larger than a hunting rifle and just as easily handled (see p. 239).

Plasma Claw
16 RP for 1 item

This hand weapon is often found in downed alien craft and is occasionally used by Men in Black. The weapon generates and fires fist-sized spheres of plasma that are directed by the wearer's hand movements (see p. 244).

Psychic Lens
15 RP for 1 item

These devices greatly enhance the use of psychic abilities for a variety of purposes, though each lens seems specialized for a specific task or purpose (see p. 235).

ATLANTEAN NANOTECH

Most of the enigmatic Atlanteans' impressive personal abilities are derived from their mastery of nanotechnology, microscopic machines capable of working on a molecular level. The Atlanteans' bodies contain specially designed nanotechnology machines, called nanites. The nanites are transported by the bloodstream throughout the Atlantean's body and quickly perform amazing alterations to cell structures.

The Atlantean nanites are specialized. Some nanites construct delicate cybernetic systems throughout the body, giving the Atlantean conscious control over its natural organic systems. Others connect its nervous system to the wireless computer network that the Atlanteans use to pilot their spacecraft. Other nanites rework the very structure of the Atlantean's body, making it superhumanly strong and fast.

Humans and Atlanteans are similar enough physically that Atlantean nanites perform much the same function in human bodies as they do in Atlantean bodies. Even so, because of subtle differences between the two races, Atlantean nanites do not function as flawlessly inside a human body. Nonetheless, some humans have been injected with Atlantean nanites successfully. Such injections usually occur through human experimentation with captured technology. More rarely, the Atlanteans perform the injections themselves.

All Atlantean nanosystems are susceptible to high levels of electromagnetic radiation. Whenever a character with one or more nanosystems is exposed to high levels of radiation, a directed burst of microwaves, or the beam of a particle accelerator or an EMP weapon, the individual suffers D10(5) points of damage. Further, there is a 1 in 10 chance each that the nanosystem will be burnt out and destroyed completely. It is theorized, but as yet unproved, that the metallic bodysuits witnessed on some Atlanteans shield them from this effect.

Chroniclers may allow characters any of the following nanite systems, but because of the rarity of Atlantean technology, an explanation should be given in each character's background and history. Each system must be purchased as a separate Paranormal Quality at character creation.

Aspect Modification System
3-point Paranormal Quality

The Atlanteans have developed a nanotech system that allows them to significantly modify their physical features at will, merely by concentrating on the desired appearance for a few moments. The system can modify eye color, skin color, and hair length, color, and style within seconds. The system can produce (or reproduce) skin coloration abnormalities such as blemishes, tattoos, and scars. The Aspect Modification System can also change the host's facial features by adjusting subcutaneous musculature and fat deposits, though this may take a few minutes. If the host is willing to lie still and allow the system to

work undisturbed for at least an hour, it can even modify the host's height by up to six inches by lengthening or shortening key bones, though body mass cannot be as easily adjusted.

The system is not easy to control for humans. A human host attempting to control the Aspect Modification System must concentrate intensely for the duration of the change. Each modification is an extremely taxing process. Skin, hair, and/or eye color modifications require five Turns and a Simple Willpower Test. The exertion deals D6(3) damage to the host, even if it fails. Changing the host's facial features requires ten Turns and a Simple Willpower Test with a –3 modifier. The process does D6 x 2(6) damage to the host, even if it fails. Changing the host's height requires a full hour of concentration and a Difficult Willpower Test. The extreme pain from such a process causes D10 x 2(10) damage, even if it fails.

Bio-Battery Energy System
1-point Paranormal Quality

The Bio-Battery Energy System produces electrical energy from waste chemicals and substances in the host's body. This makes the host's metabolism incredibly efficient and removes any need for the host to eliminate solid or liquid waste. The Bio-Battery system stores the generated energy in nanite batteries located subcutaneously in the palms of the host's hands. The system also renders the skin of the host's palm a superconducting circuit, which acts as an energy output link for Atlantean tools. The host simply grasps the tool and it is powered. A little ingenuity and some electrical jerry-rigging allows the host to power small terrestrial devices that are usually run off batteries.

The system produces a number of useful side effects. The host can consciously generate a build-up of electrical charge and discharge it when touching a conducting surface. This discharge is capable of frying any non-shielded electronic device, such as a computer or car starter, or stunning any human for D10 x 2(10) Turns who fails a Difficult Constitution Test. Use of the system in this way leaves it depleted, however, and it is unavailable for any purpose for a full hour.

As usual, the system was not designed for human physiology, and some unpleasant side effects exist. The amount of energy created is much greater than the human norm. The body temperature of a host runs in excess of 100° on average. This increase in body temperature causes the host to stand out like a beacon on any infrared vision device. Further, the human host's inability to radiate this heat effectively makes him very susceptible to heat exhaustion, particularly in warm climates. Whenever the host exerts himself continuously for more than five Turns (running or fighting, for example), he must make a Simple Willpower Test, –1 for each additional five-Turn period he continues exerting himself. For example, if a Bio-Battery host is engaged in a prolonged foot chase, he must make a Willpower Test after the fifth, tenth, and fifteenth Turns, with a modifier of zero, –1, and –2 respectively. If the host fails any such test, he passes out for D10 x 2(10) Turns.

Blood Surgeon Repair System
3-point Paranormal Quality

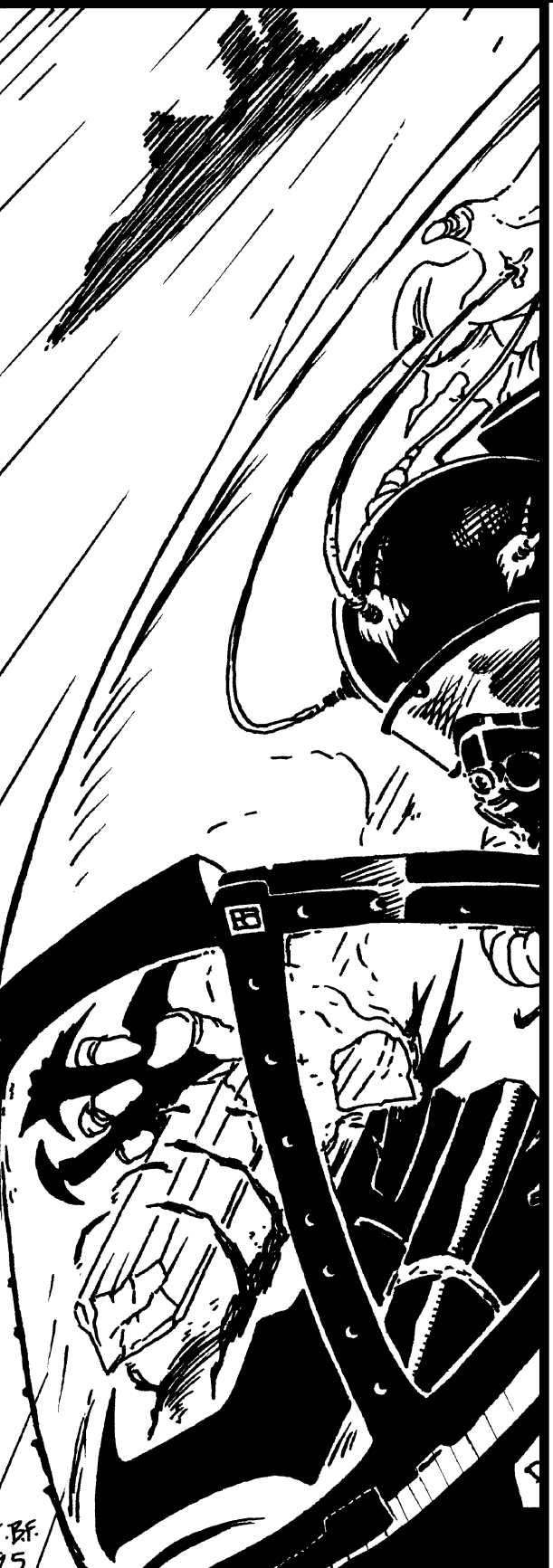
This system maintains a constant level of medical nanites in the subject's blood stream, waiting for any sign of damage. Whenever a character with the Blood Surgeon System receives damage, the nanites immediately cluster at the wound site and begin to repair the damage. No Survival Test is necessary for stabilization, as success is automatic. Thereafter, the nanites speed the healing process, allowing the character to heal in half the time usually required. The reduction of healing time also applies to any non-lethal damage the character sustains. The nanites reduce the pain caused by any wound, halving (round down) Survival and Consciousness penalties associated with the wound.

Atlantean Blood Surgeon Systems operating in humans sometimes malfunction, failing to diagnose the injury properly and actually harming the host by attempting to repair nonexistent wounds. Whenever the Blood Surgeons are activated by lethal damage (damage that reduces the character to zero Life Points or lower), the player must roll a D10. If the result is one, the Blood Surgeons have malfunctioned and cause an additional D6 x 2(6) damage to the host. After the Blood Surgeons malfunction, they cannot treat either the original wound or the additional damage caused by their error. If the nanites are reactivated by another wound, they take into account the original wound and the subsequent damage caused by their malfunction. That is, provided they don't malfunction again.

Pilot Interface Control System
2-point Paranormal Quality

Possibly the most valuable Atlantean system, at least as far as Aegis Prime is concerned, is the Pilot Interface Control System. These nanites rewire the host's nervous system to enable it to link directly to the standard cybernetic interface that controls any Atlantean vehicle. Since Aegis engineers have incorporated an Atlantean control system into the Aurora interceptor aircraft, only pilots who are "equipped" with the Pilot Interface System can use the jet to its fullest capacity. A pilot who is host to such a system needs very little other training to fly an Atlantean craft due to the incredible sophistication of the ship's cybernetic systems.

The astonishing speeds at which Atlantean craft operate also require faster reflexes than possible with an unaugmented human (or Atlantean, it would seem) nervous system. To keep the host from turning the craft into so much hypersonic debris, the Pilot Interface System temporarily boosts its host's speed well beyond the norm. In humans, this requires a round of concentration and a Simple Willpower Test. This enhancement lasts as long as the human interfaces with any device employing an Atlantean control system. Otherwise, it lasts for D6 x 2(6) Turns and increases the host's Dexterity by one and Speed by ten.



Unfortunately, as with all Atlantean systems, the interface does not mesh as well with the human body as it does with the Atlantean. In a human host, the system tends to produce slight nervous twitches and ticks, particularly after it has been implanted for a while. The twitches are merely a nuisance, however, compared to the main side effect. Occasionally (1 in 10), when a human host triggers the boost function, the system overloads the host's nervous system, producing a blackout and seizure for D10 x 2(10) Turns.

AURORA

The Aurora Project is a long-standing Aegis program pushing the boundaries of human aerospace technology. The project has produced a number of prototypes and operational aircraft and is constantly improving and retooling planes. It is based at the Ranch.

The latest craft, the Aurora III, is a triangular delta-wing aircraft with a titanium alloy airframe whose design relies heavily on the results of high-speed, high-altitude tests performed by the SR-71 Blackbird. The plane is powered by two different drive systems. The first is a pair of top-of-the-line turbofan jets. These engines allow the plane to take advantage of its highly advanced stealth capacity (–4 to targeting or detection Tasks). The second is a set of primitive fusion pulse-detonation engines, partially reverse-engineered from stolen NDD technology. The latter engines give the Aurora III a top sustained speed of just under Mach 3.5 (3.5 times the speed of sound) but completely nullify any concealment capacity. The pulse engines are often unreliable however, failing on a D10 roll of 1-3 when engaged. Failure forces the pilot back to the turbos and requires a week in a Superb workshop for repairs. The different engines cannot be run at the same time, and given reliability concerns, the turbofans are used primarily.

The ship has incorporated the latest developments in vectored thrust technology, but a choice must be made. The turbofans give it short take-off and landing capacity. The pulse detonation engines are more powerful and give it near-standing take-off and landing capacity. Again, the latter engines are rarely used due to their experimental nature.

Control systems cannibalized from a downed Atlantean craft allow the pilot to fly the Aurora III by thought alone, enabling a skilled pilot to maintain complete control of the craft through aerobatic maneuvers that would be impossible with conventional aircraft (Handling increases to 8). This maneuverability has led many individuals witnessing it from the ground to misidentify the craft as extraterrestrial in origin. Oddly, only certain pilots develop a "feel" for the control system sufficient to use the vehicle to full capacity. Others can fly the plane, but only at reduced performance levels (normal Handling).

The Aurora III weapons systems are also exceptional. The target acquisition and missile guidance systems are augmented by Grey psychic lenses and the pilot's telepathic abilities. The use of psychic ability in the Aurora III's weapon control system adds a +4 bonus to any related weapon Task, and increases Accuracy to 10. As would be expected, the Greys themselves have the easiest time detecting and avoiding the Aurora's weapons (bonuses are inapplicable to their craft). These systems are tied to conventional high-yield medium

missiles (preliminary tests with extraterrestrial directed energy weapons have proved unsatisfactory). The plane also has 12 ECM pods.

Cells seeking a permanently assigned Aurora III or any of its predecessors must have hangar space to keep the ship hidden, a private airstrip, an aerospace workshop, and a pilot capable of flying the craft.

AURORA III

To use the Aurora III to its full capacity, a pilot must have the Piloting (Aurora) skill, the Pilot Interface Control System (Atlantean Nanotech) Quality, and Telepathy Strength 2 or better. Pilots without these abilities may not use the Neural Interface System and do not gain the weapons systems bonuses. The Aurora III's predecessors in the program are still available for use, but they perform only slightly better than modern-day fighter aircraft. On the other hand, they do not require the Pilot Interface Control System or any psychic power.

Weight: 62,000; *Speed:* 2,500 (1,500 turbo)/1,250; *Acceleration:* 220 (110 turbo); *Range:* 3,000; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 5; *DC:* 670; *AV:* 20; *Accuracy:* 5; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1

MHIC-EDOM

The Microwave Hypnotic Intracerebral Control–Electronic Dissolution of Memory (MHIC-EDOM) has two functions producing different but complementary effects. The first function, Microwave Hypnotic Intracerebral Control, uses carefully controlled microwave emissions to invoke a desired mental state in the subject. The MHIC-EDOM operator must be within 30 yards of the target and must pass an Intelligence and Electronics Task resisted by the target's Simple Willpower Test. Each attempt takes ten seconds (two Turns), during which only extremely sensitive individuals notice anything out of the ordinary (passing a Difficult Perception Test results in a ringing in the subject's ears and a slight headache). Once the operator succeeds, he may immediately elicit the desired mental state in the subject.

The following effects are possible:

Fear: The subject is immediately forced to relive his most terrifying nightmare for D10 Turns, during which time he runs directly away from the operator or, if unable to do so, curls up into a fetal position and cowers.

Homicidal Rage: The subject immediately lashes out and attacks the nearest person, friend or foe. The effect lasts for D10 Turns, during which the subject does his best to destroy anyone near him.

Trance: The subject immediately lapses into a trancelike stupor. He takes no notice of his surroundings and stands (or sits) staring blankly ahead. The trance lasts for D10(5) minutes, during which the subject may be hypnotized as if he were a willing participant. Any physical damage or pain snaps the subject out of the trance.

The second function of the MHIC-EDOM uses a modulated burst of microwaves combined with a controlled electric shock to temporarily disable the subject's short-term memory. The MHIC-EDOM operator must be within 10 yards for the electrical charge to arc properly. The operator must then pass an Intelligence and Electronics Task, resisted with a Simple Willpower Test. If successful, the subject is immediately dazed for D10 Turns. The subject's short-term memory is effectively erased for a one-hour prior to the device's use. Aside from the initial stun effects, the subject's mental faculties are not impaired; he is still be able to act as he would normally for that time, but he does not remember anything that happened during that hour.

MIND CONTROL DRUG

This drug can be administered in the manner listed after its title, but an unmodified roll of one on an Intelligence and Medicine Task results in immediate overdosing. After the effect has run its course, traces of the drug can be found in the target's system for 24 hours. Most likely, the traces will be identified only as a foreign substance and not as a drug oriented toward mind control.

NP-7 (INJECTION, PILL)

Onset Time: 10 minutes **Duration:** 2–4 hours

Effect: The subject's short-term memory is impaired completely, preventing any memories from being stored in long-term memory. A Difficult Intelligence Task is required to remember anything during the duration, and even then the recall is spotty.

Overdose: Occurs on a failed administrative Task of if more than one dose is injected at one time. Upon overdose, a Simple Constitution Test must be passed. If failed, the victim immediately gains the two-point Amnesia Drawback (see p. 64).

Addiction: N/A

PSI DRUG

This drug can be administered in the manner listed after its title, but an unmodified roll of one on an Intelligence and Medicine Task results in immediate overdosing. After the effect has run its course, traces of the drug can be found in the target's system for 24 hours. Most likely, the traces will be identified only as a foreign substance and not as a drug oriented toward psi.

Batch 7 (Pill, Powder)

Onset Time: 10 minutes **Duration:** 1 week

Effect: Each dose grants a +2 to the Strength of all psychic powers. Each use of those abilities causes brain lesions and intense headaches. This imposes a –1 penalty to all actions for one hour after any psychic use. Further, immediately after ingesting the drug, the operative must make a Simple Willpower Test with a penalty equal to the number of doses taken in the last 24 hours or suffer violent seizures and unconsciousness for D10 x 2(10) hours.

Overdose: Occurs each time (Constitution + 6) doses have been employed, regardless of the duration between doses. Upon overdose, a Simple Constitution Test is required with a penalty equal to the number of prior overdose rolls during the agent's lifetime. Failure imposes the Psychic Burnout Drawback (see p. 76). A unmodified roll of one results in death.

Addiction: This is an eight-point Drawback and eliminates psychic powers or kills the character in time.

PSYCHOTRONS

Psychotrons are psychically active devices. An Aegis agent may have access to two separate types — Project RASPUTIN devices and Grey lenses (see p. 235) — but these are by no means the only ones in existence. Other psychotrons might be devised by corrupted beings or isolated innovators. Each is a rare and powerful item.

Since Aegis subsumed Project RASPUTIN, psychotrons have become available to all cells. Even so, First Order psychotrons remain almost exclusively in RASPUTIN hands, and in general only RASPUTIN scientists have the ability to create the highest-order psychotrons.

RASPUTIN psychotrons are classified in three orders. Third Order psychotrons are the least powerful, First Order the most. Each is powered by psychic energy and must be charged before use. Triggering a psychotron requires merely a moment's concentration by a psychically active person (anyone with any psychic power Strength 1 or greater). Further, a device is almost always dedicated to one psychic power and must be charged by those capable in that discipline.

Chroniclers and players can devise psychotrons as they see fit. They are capable of any feat accomplishable by psychic power.

Third Order

These devices are simple and relatively common. They are little more than psychic toys, but some agents have found practical uses for them. They are charged automatically by being close to a life force. It takes 24 hours near a human, 48 hours near an animal, or 72 hours near a plant to place one charge in a Third Order psychotron. Alternatively, any psychic may expend two Essence points over the course of half an hour to invest one charge. Where appropriate, they are triggered in one second by any psychic with the related discipline. Once triggered, Third Order psychotrons are active for one day per charge, and usually hold at most three charges.

- A black iron egg dappled with speckles of gold that spins when psychic powers are used nearby (including from the astral plane). *Related power:* Telepathy (Strength 3, Art 2).
- A smooth iron diamond that heats up when activated. It does not burn but is hot to the touch. *Related power:* Telekinesis (Strength 1, Art 2).
- A gold pin engraved with lines and circles that bends and straightens upon psychic command. This may be used as a psychic trigger for a bomb. *Related power:* Telekinesis (Strength 2, Art 2).

Second Order

These psychotrons are more complex. They are charged through concentration by a psychic with the related discipline. Six hours must be spent over the course of two days to invest one charge in the device. This drains 10 Essence points from the psychic per day. Most devices hold four charges maximum. Second Order devices may be triggered by a second of concentration and the expenditure of one Essence point by a psychic with the related discipline.

- A jade statue that acts as a focus for clairvoyance, graning a +2 bonus to Strength and Art of anyone psychically targeting the location containing the item. It also acts as a link for whoever invests energy in it, allowing him to ignore range restrictions. Each use expends one charge and lasts as long as a clairvoyance session of the corresponding power (see p. 191). *Related power:* Clairvoyance (boosted Strength and Art).
- A wooden triangle that may be passed over a flat surface such as an Ouija board. It grants visions about a past or present event or person. Each use drains one charge. *Related power:* Clairvoyance (Strength 4, Art 4).

First Order

These are extremely powerful devices that usually hold up to six charges. A psychic with Strength 5 or greater in the related discipline may invest one charge of power by expending 10 Essence points, two Life Points, and ten minutes of concentration. First Order devices are activated in one Turn by any psychic with the related discipline at no cost.

- A polished sheet of silver trimmed in bronze that provides an extended vision about the future of one place, object, or person. Each use drains one charge. *Related power:* Clairvoyance (Strength 7, Art 6).

Satellite Alexis

This secret orbital psychotron is the crowning achievement of Project RASPUTIN. It was charged by Soviet cosmonauts and controlled from the *Mir* space station. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the crash of *Mir*, and the absorption of Project RASPUTIN by Aegis, the satellite has come under the control of an Aegis ground team. That team is specially trained to keep the satellite fully charged (eight-charge capacity) and correctly positioned. Psychotronic devices create a psychic link between the satellite and the control station, allowing recharging and nearly instant command despite the great distances involved.

When triggered, *Alexis* can target an area with a radius no less than 10 yards and no more than one mile. It can be used to target objects anywhere in the atmosphere or up to 500 yards underground or underwater. The device may be positioned over a section of the globe for up to D10 + 8(13) hours. It must then be moved to avoid detection. Each use drains two charges from the satellite.

Once triggered, *Alexis* can perform one of two Tasks: clairvoyance or telepathy, both at level 10. Clairvoyance works to detect psi use within the target area. Telepathy takes time, as each mind must be contacted in turn. If there are more than 10 minds in the area of effect, it takes D10(5) hours to isolate the target mind. The ability then proceeds normally. The Chronicler can create effects as necessary.

The National Defense Directorate

Most simply put, the NDD is Aegis' rival and sworn enemy.

The NDD's Philosophy

Those who became the NDD felt the best way to deal with the alien threat was to know as much as possible about them before establishing communication. The preparation would be accomplished by shooting down an alien vessel, reverse-engineering the technology, and investigating the alien life piloting the ship. The Watch rejected this plan, but that was in fact what transpired at Roswell. Eventually, the NDD came to realize that its original theory was not going to work and a new one was needed. Thus, it decided to communicate with the aliens and open negotiations with them. The basic goal was to exchange the Directorate's knowledge of humanity for alien technology. By default, the relationship that would develop between the aliens and the NDD would educate the NDD in the ways of the alien races. The end result, the NDD theorized, was that it would be clever enough to exploit the aliens for both technology and information before humanity could be sold out.

The NDD and the Greys

As a result of the Roswell incident, the Greys were the first alien connection the NDD made. The NDD quickly gained an understanding that the Greys were not a technology-based culture. They did have something exceptionally valuable to offer, however: psychic power. The NDD realized the unparalleled potential in attaining that ability.

The Greys introduced the NDD to some new types of technology, which mainly focused on psychic energy. The Greys also provided the NDD with access to powerful psychics, the likes of which they had never seen before. The most valuable commodity the Greys provided the NDD was unintended. While the Greys conducted experiments and researched humans, the NDD spent a tremendous amount of energy attempting to understand their alien cohorts. This made the NDD very knowledgeable about the Greys, which they used as a bargaining tool when dealing with the Saurians.

To learn about humanity, the Grey's approach was to abduct people. Although these actions were being carried on well before the NDD became involved, they expanded greatly when the NDD began to assist. With more attention being paid by the public to alien sightings, the Greys were looking for more discreet ways to carry out their studies. Consequently, the NDD often provides locations for Grey experimentation on humans, or actually abducts the people itself. Indeed, an entire section of the Dulce Base was teleported in by Greys and has been reserved exclusively for their activities.

THE NDD AND THE SAURIANS

During the 1950s, the NDD worked mainly out of the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. Having access to radar equipment, some strategically placed members of the NDD picked up on strange occurrences happening nearby and likened them to the Bermuda Triangle phenomena. An unidentified vessel would be tracked to a certain area and then be lost on radar. This was most disturbing to the NDD because it had begun construction on a secret base in that area.

A troop of soldiers was dispatched, including a diplomat, to locate the activity and establish communication. The NDD discovered not Greys, but a race of lizardlike aliens that called themselves the Gna-Tall. Relations were shaky at first, but in time the NDD and the Gna-Tall found a mutually advantageous arrangement.

Unaware of each other previously, it turned out that both the Gna-Tall and the NDD had started to build underground bases relatively close to each other. The Gna-Tall lacked the proper manpower and the NDD the proper technology to construct their ideal bases. Thus, an initial pact was made. The NDD abandoned its construction site and joined the Gna-Tall's. The end result was an extensive underground base located near Dulce, New Mexico.

What the Gna-Tall wanted next from the NDD was knowledge. The Gna-Tall needed to understand humanity so that they could protect themselves and gain allies against their ancient enemies. Once the NDD briefed them on the Greys, they sought information on that race as well. The Gna-Tall were willing to share technology with the NDD in exchange for what the humans could teach them. In a sense, the Gna-Tall used the NDD for information in the same way the NDD used the Greys. The deal was very profitable for the NDD because it provided them with access to a great deal of technology.

The most significant of the technology gained from the Gna-Tall was embodied in two types of aircraft. The first was a ship built from both Gna-Tall and human tech: the TD-121. The TD-121 is a powerful fight-

TD-121

Given the improvements in engine size and weight due to Gna-Tall aid, this aircraft is smaller and lighter than the Aurora III. It also has superior radar/infrared jamming, stealth, and emission cloaking (–5 to targeting or detection Tasks) – another upgrade from the aliens. Its top speed is slightly greater than the Aurora's, and its high-agility wings and lower mass allow for greater maneuverability and deceleration. Of course, the TD-121 has no nano-helmet or clairvoyance lens additions, and its control and targeting suffer in that regard. Like the Aurora, the TD-121 cannot use both engines simultaneously and cannot take advantage of its cloaking capacity if it is running on its pulse detonation engines. On the other hand, TD-121 pilots are much more confident in the maintenance of their pulse detonation engines given the Gna-Tall aid (no reliability roll needed).

The TD-121 is armed with normal medium missiles and 12 ECM pods.

Weight: 48,000; *Speed:* 2,600 (1,600 turbo)/1,300; *Acceleration:* 240 (120 turbo); *Range:* 3,000; *Toughness:* 4; *Handling:* 7; *DC:* 530; *AV:* 20; *Accuracy:* 6; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 1/1

BLACK MANTA

The Black Manta is a sleek, quiet troop transport with radical stealth surface features (–5 to targeting or detection Tasks). It is generally painted black and, on the rare occasions that it ventures out in daylight, looks somewhat like the sea creature that shares its name. The ship uses vectored thrust for lift and thrust. Like the other advanced human craft, it uses two propulsion systems: three state-of-the-art turbofan jets when using its stealth capacity, and three rudimentary pulse detonation engines for speed. The pulse detonation engines are remarkably similar to those used in the Aurora; indeed, it was this technology that Aegis captured and used as the basis for its engine work. Even so, no reliability roll is needed when using them.

The Manta wields a 20mm cannon in an underbelly turret can launch 12 ECM pods. It has room for 12 fully armed and loaded troopers.

Weight: 63,000; *Speed:* 2,000 (1,200 turbo)/1,000; *Acceleration:* 180 (100 turbo); *Range:* 2,500; *Toughness:* 6; *Handling:* 4; *DC:* 680; *AV:* 30; *Accuracy:* 4; *Cost:* n/a; *Crew/Passengers:* 2/12; *Cargo:* 1,000 lbs.; *Armament:* range 100/200/800/1500/2000; D10 x 10(50); 20-round bursts; target AV halved.

er plane. Its major drawback is that the NDD is completely reliant on the Gna-Tall to repair and maintain the ship's propulsion and stealth systems. The other aircraft was built after the TD-121 and was actually reverse-engineered from it. The Black Manta is a troop ship built by humans based on Gna-Tall tech. It is faster and has better stealth capacity than a human-engineered troop ship. Best of all, the Black Manta can be maintained by humans.

Presently, a few Gna-Tall work as agents for the NDD. These Gna-Tall are molecularly altered to appear human. Generally the agents travel in groups of threes, one of whom is a specially trained NDD liaison, and are referred to as "Men in Black." With the aid of the NDD, the MiBs are the Gna-Tall's infiltration soldiers. For all practical purposes, the Men in Black appear completely human, but they are not very talented at mimicking human emotions. This is not a major giveaway because they generally take on the appearance of hulking men and humans rarely expect someone who looks like a football player to display much emotion. This has greatly aided the assimilation of the Men in Black.

Unlike with the Greys, over time, relations between the Gna-Tall leader, Kalen, and the diplomat who initiated contact, Colonel Ian Wright, grew stronger. Further, some measure of respect has grown between the soldiers and scientists who work closely together. While neither side would act in any way that compromises security or self-preservation, a type of "friendship" has arisen between individual members of the NDD and the Gna-Tall.

THE NDD AND THE PARANORMAL

From its extensive work with Greys, the NDD attained insight into psychic phenomena that Aegis could not. Thus, it knows a great deal about psychic energy and the Greys as psychics. Its understanding of human psychics is somewhat lacking compared to Aegis, however. The NDD has few human psychics, which makes each one a valuable commodity. When a need arises for a powerful psychic, the Directorate turns to the Greys for aid. Given this, the NDD has yet to place a great priority on gathering psychic and supernatural information. The NDD believes that as long as it can rely on the Greys to do their psychic bidding for it, resources are better devoted elsewhere.

HOW THE NDD OPERATES

The NDD is composed of many different types of agents. The military recruits range from high-ranking armed services personnel to special operatives. Any member of the NDD who is

currently affiliated with the military is careful not to attract too much attention to himself. Further, if any of these NDD agents are observed engaging in questionable activity, they are usually able to cover themselves. There are enough high-ranking Army personnel who belong to the NDD that, if needed, any information revealed can be deemed a matter of national security and kept from the public. To some extent, this provides the Book with an advantage over Aegis.

Civilians also work for the NDD. A large number are scientists based at Dulce. Surprisingly few ordinary civilians conduct NDD field work. These agents take the most risks and thus have the greatest chance of being captured or killed. For this reason, these agents invariably have completely reconstructed histories and IDs. Many are ex-military, trained in a variety of operations, allowing them to be extremely versatile in the field.

Dulce Base is the center of operations for the NDD. The base is a labyrinth of levels and tunnels located somewhere under New Mexico. Of course, the NDD does not work solely out of Dulce. It has strongholds in different military bases located across the country. In areas without a strong military presence, the NDD establishes bogus business fronts.

Like Aegis, the NDD has agents in many parts of the United States, allowing for quick dispatch of personnel when needed. A major difference between the NDD and Aegis is that the NDD has an overall agenda, and its agents are sent to do the bidding of the highest echelon. Aegis cells are responsible for themselves and are fairly autonomous.

Overall, the NDD is not structured as securely as Aegis. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to track the NDD and hold it accountable for its actions because it has successfully buried itself so deeply in the military. Covered by the protection of the National Security Act, it is pretty much unreachable. Its only obstacle is Aegis.

NDD Agent

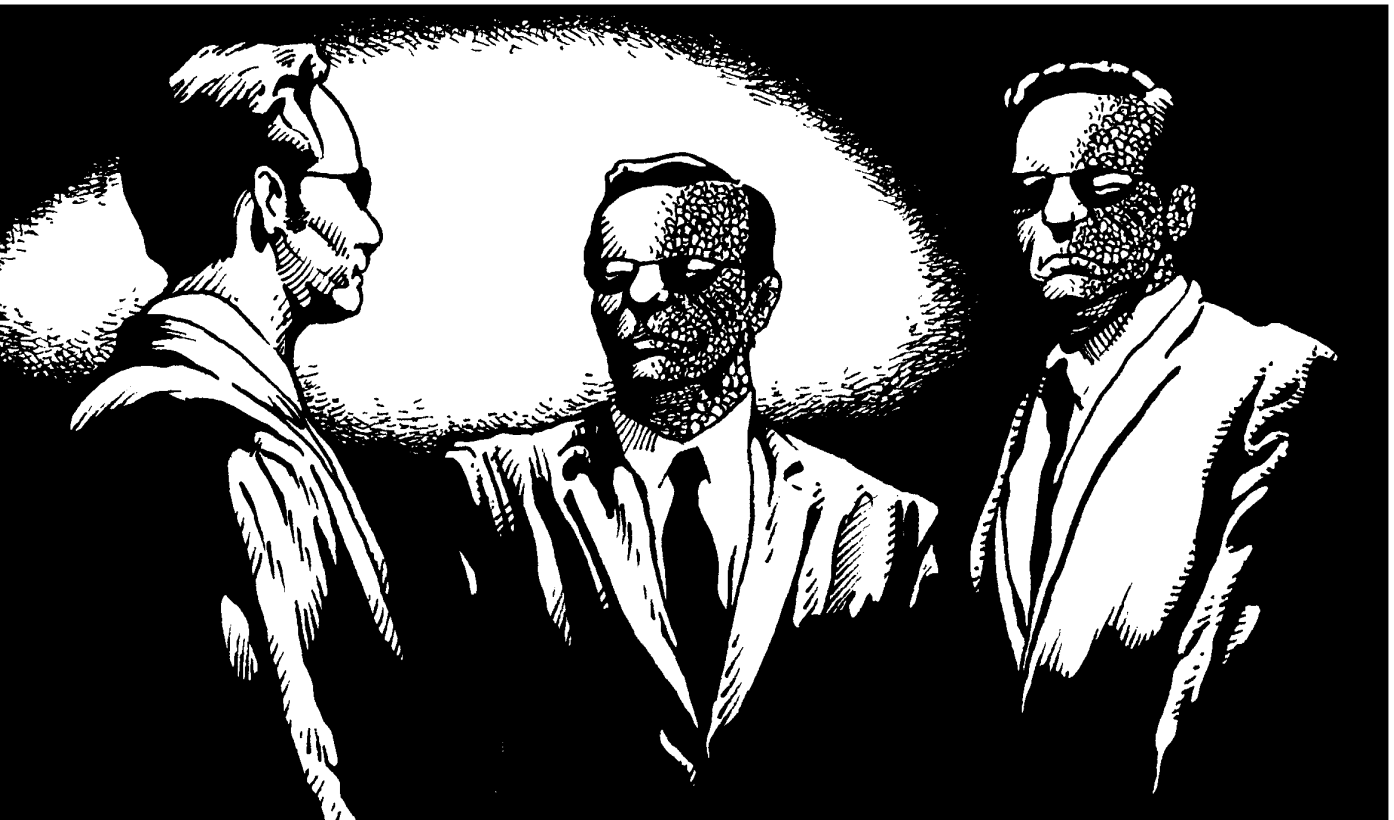
These stats represent a low-level NDD recruit, or an uninformed contract employee. Field agents usually have levels in Attributes and skills otherwise found only in elite special forces operatives.

STR 2	**DEX** 3	**CON** 3
INT 3	**PER** 3	**WIL** 2
LP 42	**End** 26	
Spd 12	**Essence** 20	

Qualities & Drawbacks: Hard to Kill 4, Influence (Military) 1, Military Rank 2, Official Identity (No Records), Nerves of Steel, Obligation (Extreme)

Skills: Brawling 2, Computers 2, Dodge 2, Drive (Cars) 3, Electronic Surveillance 2, First Aid 2, Guns (Handgun) 4, Intimidation 2, Martial Arts 2, Notice 2, Occult Knowledge 2, Questioning 2, Research/Investigation 2, Stealth 3, Surveillance 2

Gear: Pistol (D8 x 4(16)), but sometimes equipped with alien tech provided by the Gna-Tall



THE EXTRATERRESTRIALS

Aegis' knowledge of the extraterrestrial is extensive in many areas but far from complete. In general, its information on the Greys is correct, as is what little it knows about the Saurians. Its evaluation of the Atlanteans is woefully inaccurate.

In truth, both the Saurians and Atlanteans are "feeding" technology to Earth. This has resulted in humanity gaining knowledge at an exponential rate – far faster than would happen naturally. Each of these races acts for their own reasons, and their best interests.

In the following pages, the knowledge possessed by Aegis is presented first. Background information unknown or only partially known to Aegis appears after thereafter.

AEGIS' GREY INFORMATION

The following information can be found by properly searching HERMES (as long as it has not been blocked from a particular link for some reason.

Summary

The Greys are a race of extraterrestrial origin that possess extraordinary psychic abilities. The first documented appearance of Greys is dated 19 May 1937.

As their "language" is entirely psychic, only trained psychics can communicate directly with them. They can read and project thoughts, which allows them to communicate with nonpsychics, though establishing this type of communication is rare and hazardous. They will avoid confrontation by any means available, but are extremely dangerous when cornered. Time loss is often indicative of the presence of Greys.

In physical appearance, Greys appear as four- to five-foot-tall humanoid beings with smooth gray skin and large heads. They have large black composite eyes, no nose, and a slit-like mouth that is used mainly for breathing. They have been observed making dolphin-like whistling and hooting noises when they are in physical pain.

Physical Appearance

A summary of 46 individual reports citing Grey physical appearance reveals that their average height is 4'5" and average weight 81 lbs. They appear as short humanoid with smooth, thick, gray skin. Eyes are black, revealing composite structure under close examination. Limbs are jointed like a primate's, and they walk upright. Hands have five digits including an opposable thumb. Feet have two toes, with ridges that appear to be additional toes under casual observation. Greys do not wear clothing or other adornments, and are rarely in possession of physical objects.

Physiology

Knowledge of the physiology of Greys is based on autopsies and on direct contact with the aliens. Their auditory sensory organs appear rudimentary for the most part, but some sophistication resembling cetacean aural neural systems is present. They have no olfactory senses. Their vision ranges 180 degrees and they are sensitive to motion. Their color distinction is generally poor, better at the blue end of the spectrum, extending into the ultraviolet.

Grey physiology is consistent with that of an aquatic-evolved species. The skeleton is composed of both hard and flexible cartilage, with the "mouth" serving only as a breathing apparatus and not for feeding. Greys ingest their food, which consists largely of plankton-like animals, through the skin. They secrete a dry chemical that dissolves the outer cell membranes of their food, allowing them to ingest the contents more easily. Their cells exhibit a DNA structure which uses the same encoding scheme found in terran life, but with markedly different contents. Their chemistry is compatible with terran ecosystems, and they can digest Earth-grown food. They are remarkably resistant to disease and do not seem to become ill except under extraordinary circumstances. Their natural lifespan and mode of reproduction are unknown, although some evidence points to a form of asexual reproduction. From observation and psychic contact, and considering their relatively poor hearing and underdeveloped vocal chords, psychic rather than verbal communication is assumed.

Technology

The Greys employ a mix of native and human technology. Exactly why they have an interest in human tech is unknown, but the favored hypothesis is that they are using our tech because it is more efficient for dealing with terran species.

Their native technology has not yet been entirely deciphered, and all attempts at reverse-engineering have failed. Their tech appears to contain no moving parts, even down to the atomic scale, and also contains no trace of known psychoactive materials as used in human psychotrons.

Efforts by psychics to determine the function of Grey technology have met with minor success, and certain psychic-powered Grey technology has been incorporated into such terrestrial equipment as the Aurora fighter aircraft weapon's module.

Time Loss

Individuals experiencing time loss should suspect the involvement of Greys. Greys have the ability to "blank" an individual's mind, during which time the subject receives no sensory stimulus and does not notice the passage of time. Persons so affected can end up in dangerous situations – if they "blank" when operating a vehicle, for example. Greys appear to have little regard for this unintentional but deadly side effect of time

loss. The duration of the time loss phenomenon can be as little as a few moments or as much as several hours. Even longer occurrences, up to a week, are more likely in the event of an abduction.

Behavior

Greys' behavior can best be described as timid. They generally avoid confrontation by inducing time loss prior to their arrival. This is the usual means for performing abductions, but it is not 100% effective. Some individuals are more resistant to the phenomenon than others from the outset, and others shrug off the effects of the time loss, particularly during prolonged experiences. Greys are never directly violent, although their activity can often generate situations which are dangerous to those who are unprepared. When dealing with Greys, be aware of the unintentional danger posed by time loss.

Though they never display physical violence, they can be especially dangerous when cornered. Groups of three or more Greys have never been taken alive and are extremely dangerous. Do not attempt to communicate with Greys: they will not be accommodating, and it may only serve to agitate them. Specially trained psychics have been able to initiate contact, but without prolonged interrogation, little in-depth knowledge has been gained.

Culture

The Greys as a race, without exception, are nonviolent. Perhaps a better term would be a-violent. While they do not attack even when their lives are threatened, they are ambivalent to the fates of humans who attempt to interfere with their activity. No evidence suggests they work with unified purpose, and no nationalities, sects, or other types of divisions have been observed. Greys do tend to work in small groups, and it is hypothesized that these groups are, in fact, family units. They are almost always encountered in groups of three or four and do not separate.

The Grey activity observed on Earth suggests that they are explorers, but with low morality concerning their subjects. Their abductions and experiments indicate that they have only a basic knowledge of our types of ecosystems, and theirs is assumed to be equally alien to us. They appear to have had little or no contact with other alien races, but there appears to be animosity between Greys and Atlanteans. Why is unknown.

Black Book and Greys

The Black Book has attempted to forge extensive contacts with Greys in an effort to secure knowledge of their technology. Although there is no indication that the Black Book is dissatisfied with their relationship, no evidence indicates that they are making any progress toward understanding Grey technology. The Black Book assists the Greys in abductions, often by locating individuals for them. No standard criterion for abductees has been observed, but it is clear that in any given case they are looking for subjects with specific characteristics. Unlike most of those Grey abductions unassisted by the Black Book, these individuals are rarely returned. The success of the experiments is unknown, and the abductions have continued at a steady rate over at least the last forty years.

BACKGROUND ON THE GREYS

The extraterrestrials known as the Greys are the most well known to Aegis and the rest of humanity. Still, they are an enigma. What Aegis has learned through scientific methods is accurate, and many of its hypotheses are as well. Despite this, it knows little of why the Greys are here or what they gain from their seemingly pointless activity. This is as it should be.

Psychic Abilities

Greys have complete conscious control of their psychic abilities, unlike most of humanity. Further, they have always been in control of their abilities. The phenomenon of Seepage does not exist on their home planet, nor was it ever a phase of their evolution. On their homeworld, psychic energy is even more abundant than on Earth, but it is also precisely controlled. Even single-celled animals have control over their limited use of psychic power.

Control of these abilities has progressed to the point that Greys can evoke very specific results, combining their talents in intricate ways that appear almost magical. All Greys can utilize any of the psychic disciplines at will, in any combination. The one exception is precognition, which seems to be a twisted result of Seepage.

Individual members of the race can combine abilities seamlessly, allowing them to harness much more raw power than any single human can muster. It is this competitive advantage that gave them the luxury of evolving sentience and undertaking such tremendous projects as interstellar travel. Travel is a simple concept that they can firmly grasp. Indeed, they have extended their abilities to the point where they can actually teleport. This is one of their most closely guarded secrets and it has allowed them to travel interstellarly, much to the Atlanteans' vexation. This ability is not a trivial one, however. Successful use requires current knowledge of the destination area (which may be gathered via Clairvoyance) and full concentration.

The natural ability of a Grey is not significantly more powerful than that of a human psychic. The majority of their psychic superiority stems from the range and refinement of their abilities. Comparing Telekinetic abilities, for example, the average Grey is able to manipulate roughly the same mass as a powerful human psychic, *e.g.*, a compact car. The Grey, however, could not only lift it ten stories, but also open the trunk and change the flat.

Psychic Lenses

For Greys, the closest native analog to human tools are their lenses. These are structures, usually large, that allow them to concentrate their abilities with even more effect than normal. Their ships are the most likely lenses to be encountered on Earth and are designed to allow them to focus their psychic energy on movement. Other lenses take the appearance of geological or architectural formations, and can serve to aid in any of their abilities. The concept of tools which can operate independently of an active source (i.e., a Grey) is something they have been introduced to only since their arrival on Earth.

At the Chronicler's discretion, a Grey lens may be devised that boosts any psychic ability. A portable lens can add up to five levels to Strength, but one to three is more common. Art relies on mental dexterity and experience. Thus, it is more difficult to boost than Strength, which is simply raw power. Portable lenses are limited to boosting Art by three levels, and even these lenses are very rare.

Lenses are most often spherical and covered with finely processed metal coatings. The inside is filled with a rare psychoactive coral-like substance; there are no moving parts.

The following lenses are the most frequently encountered.

Amnesia Lens: This object boosts the user's telepathy by one level in Art and three levels in Strength when engaged in mind wiping a subject. The target can resist using a Simple Willpower Test, but if he fails to overcome the user's Willpower and Telepathy Art Task, he will forget everything the user selects from his memory (usually an observation or abduction experience).

Paralysis Lens: This object increase the user's telepathy by two levels in Art and three levels in Strength for purposes of forcing a target to cease all action. The paralysis lasts as long as the user concentrates, and for a number of minutes equal to the user's Strength (including the lens' boost) after the concentration ends. The victim resists with a Simple Willpower Test against the user's Willpower and Telepathy Art Task.

Race Relations

The Greys regard Atlanteans (they can identify them psychically) as creatures to be avoided. They have great difficulty reading, and therefore communicating with, Atlanteans. The history of Atlantean violence toward them is much more intense than anything they endure from humans, and although they have not (yet) learned to comprehend it, they have learned to avoid it.

The Greys are even more fearful of the Saurians than the Atlanteans. They can sense their true nature, and it is a thousandfold more intense and alien than that of the Atlanteans. The Greys' fear is motivated less by any actual knowledge the Saurians possess, but simply because the Saurians are, to them, so extreme. Greys will flee in near panic when Saurians are close.

Playing the Greys

Of all the aliens, the Greys should appear to humanity as the most, well, alien. Their nonuse of violence is an absolute. In some cases this may result in little choice but flight. This is not cowardice to them, but merely prudence. Their natural reaction is to use their abilities to mask their presence and make every attempt to avoid detection. If found, they use any number of means to ensure a safe escape, including time loss, distractions such as arrival of their ship, and teleporting. They may even resort to a mental domination command to "stop" which can potentially strike a man dead in his tracks. If the human has made it far enough to warrant this kind of panic reaction, however, he's likely a psychic himself and therefore resistant.

Player psychic communication with Greys should be restricted. It is not only difficult and unpleasant for the Greys to translate most human thoughts, but also uninteresting. Few human psychics have had the extensive exposure to Greys that would be required for them to send a meaningful message in the Greys' native tongue, so the most they can do is make irritating noises at them. That is, if the Greys care to listen, which they do not. Not to what any Aegis agent is likely to say, anyway.

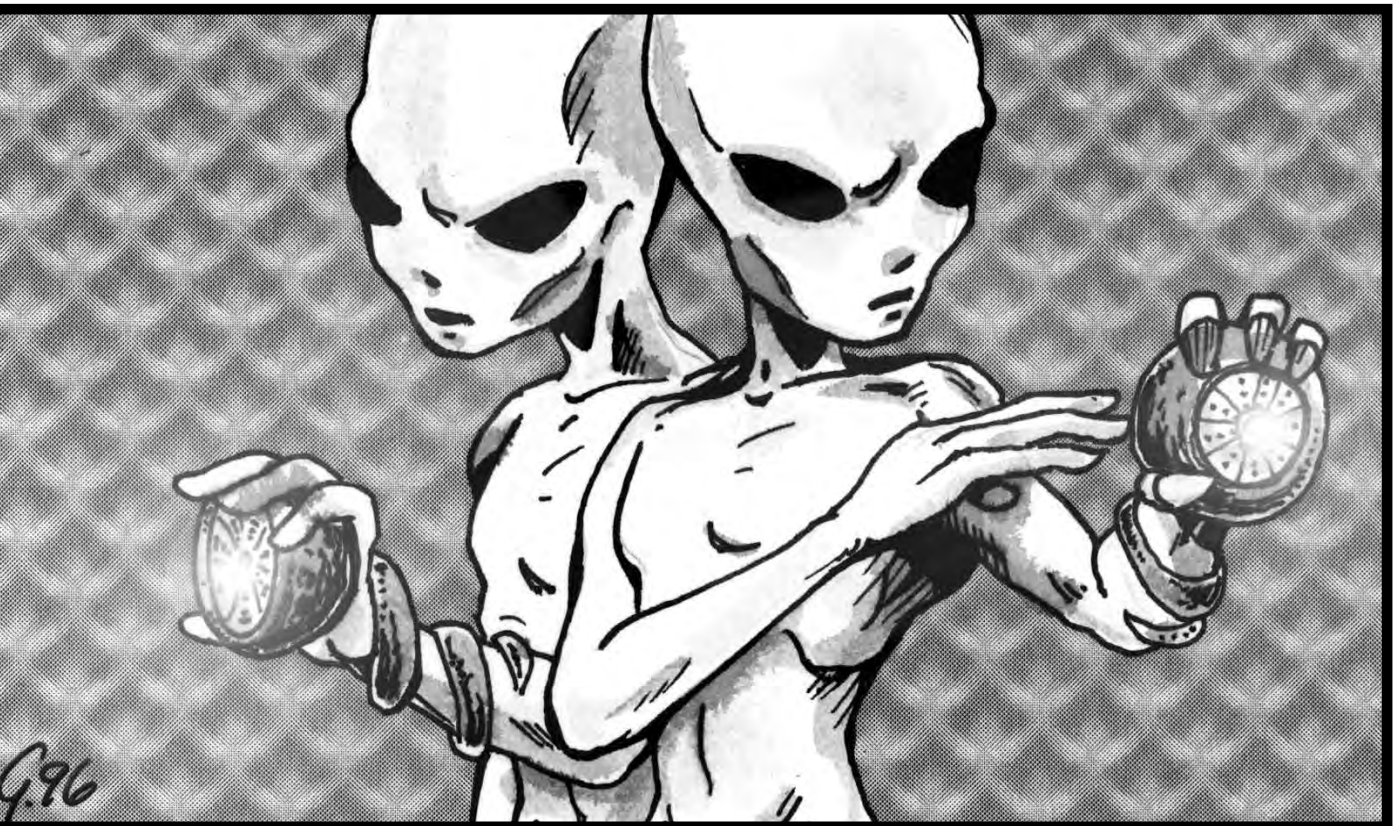
Grey

STR 2	**DEX** 3	**CON** 2
INT 4	**PER** 3	**WIL** 5
LP 26	**End** 32	
Spd 10	**Essence** 37	

Qualities & Drawbacks: Psychic, Psychological Problems (Severe Obsession – non-violence)

Skills: Hypnotism 2, Medicine 5, Pilot (Saucer) 3

Psychic Abilities: All (except precognition) Strength 3, Art 3



AEGIS' ATLANTEAN INFORMATION

The following information can be found by properly searching HERMES (as long as it has not been blocked from a particular link for some reason.

Summary

In some ways, the individuals known as Atlanteans are the most mysterious of all the aliens. Though most believe them to be a race of extraterrestrials, some contend that they are a secret society of humans, possibly dating to prehistory. Others claim that they do not exist and that many similar but disparate reports have been combined into a common myth. These beings are believed to be responsible for civilian accounts referring to Space Brothers, Nordics, and Ancient Astronauts.

In any case, Atlanteans are usually detectable only by the consequences of their actions, and face-to-face confrontation is rare. In physical appearance, Atlanteans seem perfectly normal humans, attractive in appearance and in perfect physical shape. They have advanced technology and are supremely confident in their encounters with humans. Although little is known about what they are, or what their motives may be, a great deal is known about their technology. Some of this knowledge is even in the public domain.

Technology

Atlantean technology is based on advanced nanotechnology. It achieves what to human culture is merely science fiction. Their nanomachines form a variety of advanced tools, including bio-implants and generalized assemblers.

Their bio-implants are suspected of performing such advanced functions as cell and organ repair, smart-equipment interface, power generation (used for powering other processes), and immune system enhancements, including protection from foreign nanosystems. Some of these capabilities are known from direct exposure, while others are inferred.

Advanced materials, such as diamond and diamond composites, have been recovered from areas with suspected Atlantean involvement. These materials appear to be under testing for aerospace applications, although no craft utilizing these materials have been recovered.

Aegis has also recovered simple assemblers which can be used to produce these and other materials, but nothing more advanced than self-repairing diamond-composite honeycomb.

Access

Both Aegis and Black Book have only limited access to nanotech items.

If Atlantean nanotech is as advanced as some reports intimate, knowledgeable application of this technology to any process would result in a thousandfold increase in performance characteristics. It is therefore unlikely that the Black Book has dealings with Atlanteans, as their technology level is consistent with known terrestrial and other alien technologies. There is also no direct evidence of Black Book dealings with Atlanteans, given the equipment recovered from Black Book sites.

Aegis, both from its contacts in the scientific community and through its own investigations of Atlanteans, is believed to have much greater knowledge of this technology than any other organization. Aegis has access to research in this field that is more state-of-the-art than that in the public domain. Some agents are known to have bio-implants of limited functionality, but the origin and reasons for this are unclear. Other Atlantean nanosystems have been reported in human hosts. All are classified top secret.

Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology is the construction of machines and materials from single atoms and molecules. Nanotechnology should not be confused with microtechnology. It is a newly developing technology that involves the construction of machines and materials one atom at a time. This would allow engineers to build incredibly small, complex machines and remove many constraints on construction with rare or difficult-to-manufacture substances, as any material can be created atom by atom if the proper base materials are available. Theoretically, when the methods of nanotech are mastered it will be possible to build machines capable of being transported through the blood stream to aid with tissue repairs and enhance the human immune system.

Any type of machine that can be constructed with conventional mechanics has a counterpart in nanotechnology, so it is possible to construct gears, cams, axles, flywheels, motors, generators and the like with features and dimensions measured in nanometers. By comparison, conventional microprocessors have feature sizes measured in microns and dimensions measured in millimeters. In addition to performing traditional operations at higher speeds, nanotechnology opens the door to a variety of new technologies, including self-replicating machines, viral-sized machines to perform biological functions, nanoscopic programmable factories, new and purer material construction, and cleaner and safer industrial processes.

Physical Appearance

Atlanteans so far encountered appear to epitomize human perfection. They are invariably beautiful, stylishly dressed, and fit. They move and talk with an air of power, confidence, and knowledge.

Atlanteans average height is six feet; their average weight is 180 lbs.

Physiology

The exact nature of the nanotechnology implants is unknown. No one with the extraordinary nanotechnological implants expected of Atlanteans has ever been captured. This is not surprising, considering the abilities such an individual would have.

Although such technology could keep Atlanteans from aging or becoming ill, lack of direct observation or study leaves this assumption unproven. This lack of direct evidence of nanotechnology has led some to suspect Atlanteans of being nothing more than humans with access to advanced technology. Their confirmed technological capabilities are not outside the range of conceivable human technology.

Behavior

The Atlanteans work on an individual or small-group basis toward unknown personal objectives.

There is no direct evidence pointing to a particular Atlantean master plan. It is the general consensus of Aegis that the Atlanteans do not have such a plan. Atlantean activity does not conform to any pattern, and many incidents appear to be contrary to previous activity.

All reports indicate that when operating in the field, Atlanteans work alone. Their operations often require years or decades of planning to infiltrate an organization, and the operatives disappear suddenly when their work is complete. Because their activity does not usually attract attention until it is complete, they are generally detected only after the fact.

Background on the Atlanteans

Imagine mankind forty thousand years from now. Forty thousand years of evolution. Forty thousand years of scientific discovery. Forty thousand years of war. This is who the Atlanteans are.

Over time, the Atlanteans have become a solitary people, shunning their own kind. Directed evolution has led to each being a perfect specimen, unflawed in body or mind. Their search for meaning in life, and the secrets of the universe, has resulted in a command of technology just short of miraculous. But their history is a long one, and one they cannot forget. Most of them have witnessed all of it firsthand. Those who choose to can still remember the days when their planet teemed with people as Earth does today, and how their technology destroyed them as a race, but not as individuals. Of those who survived and prospered, many equated survival with perfection. They decided that they had become unto gods. Others simply decided that they had no need for companionship, or the concomitant risk of treachery. Whatever their reasons, the majority of Atlanteans became loners, taking with them the technological knowledge of the entire race, and the ability to utilize it.

Nanotechnology

Atlantean technology can control normal matter at its most basic level and allows them access to tremendous raw power. Unlike Saurian technology, which can transmute matter to energy and back again into a different material form, Atlantean technology works by rearranging pre-existing matter like a colossal jigsaw puzzle. To develop this capability, they have learned to understand information theory, computation, and matter itself in ways that few races, even the Saurians, can even imagine. While both races can command incomprehensibly vast amounts of raw power, the Atlanteans can also work the intricacies of dust-sized supercomputers and the subtleties of biological processes. The combination of these two aspects, power and subtlety, is the essence of Atlantean technology, and is reflected in the Atlanteans themselves.

Long ago the Atlanteans engineered themselves to be physically perfect and highly intelligent, giving them inherent advantages even without the aid of their technology. Even their abilities have limits, however, and one was reached when they tried to go far beyond their own level of genetic engineering. So, rather than improving the molecular structure of their muscles and bones, for example, they have found it more reliable to enhance them with implants. Some of these implants go so far as to actually replace most of the original biological parts, but they always leave some part of the original. Individual Atlanteans will each decide for themselves how far they wish to take these implants. They range from supplementing various biological functions for basic safety to turning them into carbon-titanium-boned walking nanotech machines. All, however, choose to retain their natural appearance, about which they can be quite vain. Since the Atlanteans are fully capable of building nearly any type of weapon into their bodies, and can modify their bodies to heal nearly any wound within seconds, an Atlantean carrying a weapon or wearing armor is likely doing so merely to keep up his illusion of being human. When they do carry visible weaponry, such as their particle rifles, they can destroy nearly anything. When they are fully outfitted for battle, something not likely to be seen on Earth, nothing can stand against them.

Because each Atlantean designs and constructs his own equipment, no two pieces of technology look, or even operate, the same. While they all draw from a common background, the range of options in the design of even the most basic devices allows for a great deal of variation. They don't necessarily choose to use the most advanced techniques available to them, either: some might find it amusing to drive their particle rifle with a turbine chemical laser, requiring it to use a tripod and external power pack to operate properly.

Atlanteans fully comprehend everything they know about Saurian technology, which includes anything that anyone in the NDD has been exposed to. The more esoteric arts of matter-energy conversion are unknown to them, but something they are completely capable of grasping once they have been exposed to it. Their own technological base includes such capabilities as antigravity and most of the energy-field-related aspects of Saurian technology, but they are much less familiar with deep subatomic physics.

Particle Accelerator Rifle

This beam weapon fires streams of charged particles at nearly the speed of light. The beam is most effective in space, where there is no atmosphere to degrade and refract the particle stream. To be useful in an atmosphere, the PA rifle first fires a powerful laser at the target that creates a high-conductivity ionized path. A microsecond later, the particle beam is fired down the path before it disperses. The PA rifle is powered by the Atlantean Bio-Battery System. Thus, they have no ammo. On the rare occasions when they are recovered by humans. it is possible to jury-rig them to a power pack, such as a car battery, with a successful Intelligence and Electronics Task with a –3 penalty. A single shot drains a car battery. The ammo levels compare roughly to the "extra" energy that an Atlantean can spare from his Bio-Battery System. It takes 15 minutes for an Atlantean to recover that "extra" energy.

Range: 10/50/150/200/300; *Damage:* D8 x 10(40); *Cap:* 1; *Rate:* 1; *EV:* 10/5

Race Relations

While they are curious to learn what they can from the Saurians, Atlanteans are not anxious to let the Saurians know of their existence. Hence, they are content to take what little they can from the technology transfer with the NDD. The Saurians are a known variable – they can be understood and are therefore not a threat.

If anything can truly be said to frighten an Atlantean, it is the Greys. Atlanteans have absolutely no psychic abilities. All Atlanteans are, without exception, Voids. No Atlantean experiences deja vu, hunches, or any of the simple psychic phenomena that humans take for granted. The abilities the Greys possess are completely incomprehensible to the Atlanteans. The fact that psychic phenomena so blatantly contradict their advanced understanding of physics is something they cannot abide. In particular, the Greys' ability to travel faster than light is one the major reasons behind the Atlanteans' interest in them. Some have made it their crusade to find a way to emulate or duplicate these powers, while others wish only to destroy the Greys. Some have decided to accept that the Greys are simply a race better left alone.

When Grey activities threaten to interfere with their plans (usually inadvertently), Atlanteans do not hesitate to confront them directly. Even then, they usually act through human agents. The Atlanteans realize that humans, despite their ignorance of many things, have a way of getting through tough situations, and their rudimentary psychic powers are often the deciding factor. In direct confrontation with Greys, Atlanteans are much less capable than Saurians. Since Atlantean technology is based on physical objects (albeit microscopic ones), the Greys more easily comprehend and deal with it. Also, the Greys read minds, even if only superficially.

Playing the Atlanteans

The Atlanteans are the ultimate Illuminati – they know everything, wield incomprehensible power, live practically forever, and know it. Their activities on Earth penetrate to the highest levels, and they have little trouble installing themselves into whatever positions of power they find convenient. Their misanthropic nature applies only to their own people; humans are not threatening enough to deserve such status. An Atlantean's activities center on one of two things: playing god, as they have for thousands of years, or trying to control or destroy the Greys through human puppets. As gods, they are vain and whimsical, just as they were in the days of ancient Greece. The only difference today is that they have artificially advanced humanity's development in many ways, and their games have become much more subtle. Their efforts against the Greys range from genetic experimentation to commando psi teams.

Wherever Atlanteans are involved, they always act behind the scenes, becoming personally active only in rare or critical circumstances. They would likely set up a corporation to do genetic research, for example, and perhaps give it a "competitive edge" by way of some new scientific theories, but they don't get their hands dirty by actually messing around with centrifuges and gene sequences. Any of that sort of activity takes place far away in their own, much better equipped, space. But they use humans for a very good reason: humans understand, or at least can grasp, psychics, whereas the Atlanteans cannot.

Atlantean

STR 5	**DEX** 5	**CON** 4
INT 5	**PER** 4	**WIL** 4
LP 60	**End** 44	
Spd 18	**Essence** 52	

Qualities & Drawbacks: Ambidextrous, Atlantean Nanotechnology (all systems), Immortal, Psychic Void, Psychological Problems (Severe Zealot)

Skills: Computer Programming 4, Computers 5, Engineer 5, Guns (Rifle) 3, Languages (all) 5, Martial Arts 4, Medicine 4, Occult 3, Science (Biology) 4, Science (Nanotechnology) 5

Nanotechnology: All presented in this book, including regeneration at a rate of four Life Points per Turn (this system effectively reconstructs the body from near-destruction, rendering the Atlantean practically immortal).

AEGIS' SAURIAN INFORMATION

The following information can be found by properly searching HERMES (as long as it has not been blocked from a particular link for some reason.

Summary

The term Saurian refers to an alien race or group of races that work closely with the Black Book. The exact nature of these creatures is unknown, but first-hand encounters have led to a detailed description of at least one of the races. Whether other reptilian races exist is an open question. There are several reports which mention reptilian creatures unlike any others encountered; the reliability of these accounts is questionable.

In physical appearance, the one identified race is bipedal with bird-like legs, a lizard-like tail, and reptilian textured skin, from which the term Saurians is derived. No subjects of this race have ever been captured, and when encountered they are very aggressive.

More is known about what Saurians do than who they are. Their work with the Black Book consists of black military programs, few of which ever become public. The stealth craft are one such program, while others (such as the TD-121) are not even suspected by the general public or public officials.

Saurian bases are scattered and hidden, but the majority of them are in warmer, desolate climates. There is speculation that this is the Saurians' preference, though it could simply be because of the areas' low population densities.

Black Book Relations

The Black Book's dealings with the Saurians have resulted in numerous secret military projects.

The Black Book is as protective of its relationship with the Saurians as it is of its relationship with the Greys. While the Saurians appear to be more than capable of taking care of themselves, the Black Book spares no expense in keeping others from having contact with them. In particular, no deceased Saurian has ever been found, nor have any been taken alive. All information about the Saurians' physical appearance is reported by Aegis cell members who have survived encounters with the reptilian race.

The Black Book is working on dozens of military programs with suspected Saurian involvement. While few of these programs reach the public eye, some such as the stealth program and the Black Manta have been sighted or leaked. Many of these projects are military aircraft, but some include ground forces, strategic weapons, and SDI. Often, these developments become incorporated into mainstream U.S. military programs.

Grey Relations

There are no conspicuous relations between the Grey and Saurian races, although both alien races work with the Black Book. No Black Book projects discovered to date have included both races at the same time.

Although it is unlikely that each is unaware of the other, it is possible that the Black Book is making an effort to keep them from dealing with each other. It is also possible that the races have nothing to offer each other and they see no reason for interaction. It is possible that the Greys have no interest in the Saurians, as they have not demonstrated psychic abilities.

Technology

Saurian technology is based on advanced particle physics and wave mechanics.

From the few samples of Saurian technology recovered, they appear hundreds of years more advanced in the physical sciences. While the basic principles behind the technology are understandable, their application is far beyond current human capacity. Saurian devices routinely manipulate energy in ways that seem to defy the modern wisdom of physics, and the raw power they harness for common activities exceeds projections of humanity's abilities for the foreseeable future. One Black Book site was discovered doing megaton-scale nuclear warhead testing inside an underground bunker. The devastating blasts were contained by a Saurian containment field.

Of the items recovered, several are personal weapons that resemble prosthetics. This suggests that Saurians prefer to use weapons that appear as extensions of their bodies rather than "tools." One such device, covering the arm to the elbow, has earned the name plasma claw. These weapons fire contained plasma bolts roughly under user control, which can melt nearly any material, including most types of vehicle and ship armor. The weapon has no "ammunition," but an energy source of unknown operation is evident. Extensive testing does not appear to have diminished the "charge."

The TD-121 appears to use a Saurian drive mechanism to achieve its neutral buoyancy in the atmosphere. Short-term possession of one of these craft revealed numerous advanced alien, although clearly prototype, systems, while the control systems and electronics were of obvious human origin (though also advanced). The craft is capable of supersonic travel and nearly instantaneous acceleration. It is also designed to be capable of low-Earth-orbit altitudes.

Physical Appearance

The one confirmed Saurian race is reptilian in appearance. They average six feet in height and 210 lbs. in weight.

The one confirmed race of Saurians is a bipedal species with a vaguely reptilian appearance. They stand roughly the height of a human adult. Their thick skin is dark and patterned, hairless and nonscaled. Their legs are birdlike, with an extended heel that looks like a backward knee. The head is large, with small eyes and a protruding snout. Hands are three-fingered with an opposable thumb. A prominent tail, used for balancing the forward-leaning stance, reaches roughly two-thirds the length of their legs.

Behavior

Saurians seem to be directing the development of the U.S. military-industrial complex.

Unlike other extraterrestrial races, the Saurians are reluctant to interact directly with the general population. This is almost certainly due to their desire for secrecy and an inability to disguise themselves easily. Their practice of working through the Black Book has had more direct effect on human society than any but Aegis realize, however, and few secret military programs are without some trace of their influence.

The Saurians' operations, and the nature of their treaties and deals with the Black Book, have caused some analysts to speculate that they are directing the growth and development of the U.S. military-industrial community for some undetermined purpose. Theories as to their goals include the construction or repair of some advanced technology, the building of technological infrastructure capable of supporting trade with the Saurians, the creation of a target worth conquering, and the development of human skills to make the race useful as slave labor. The least likely of these theories posits that Saurians act merely out of genuine goodwill and the desire to further human knowledge.

Background on the Saurians

While Aegis has had extensive second-hand exposure to the Saurians through the NDD, its understanding of the real Saurian threat falls far short of reality. This is the NDD's most successful cover-up to date, though they really do not deserve all the credit. The Gna-Tall Saurians themselves are primarily responsible for ruthlessly eliminating evidence of their true nature, for disseminating false information, and for encouraging misperceptions. Even the NDD knows only what the Gna-Tall want it to, and with respect to their organization, this is precious little. Thus, despite learning much about the joint work between the Saurians and the NDD, Aegis has little actual knowledge about the Saurians themselves. Aegis has, however, had far more direct encounters with them than they realize, for the Saurians are also the Men in Black.

The real Saurians are a race of beings distinctly reptilian in appearance. Aegis has, more out of ignorance than any real evidence, grouped many other creatures in with the Saurians. Most of these are hybrids, mutants, or mere fabrications. This has served the NDD and the Saurians well, and they take advantage of this misinformation as best they can. To further complicate matters, the Saurians are composed of many races, and the Gna-Tall race has many classes. Each class is a variation on the theme, but each is physically distinct. The description in the Aegis computer is that of a technician-warrior class, which, along with the Men in Black, comprise the bulk of the Gna-Tall on the planet.

The Gna-Tall are an advance force, actually fleeing the bulk of the hostile Saurian forces that are still on their way to Earth. When they arrived in the mid-1940s, the United States appeared to be the preeminent power. For that reason, the Gna-Tall set up operations in North America. They realized that they cannot stand against the combined might of the other Saurians and have sought human allies to help prepare for the coming fight. Although not without its initial problems, the Gna-Tall/NDD alliance has grown stronger as time passes.

Three other races have expeditionary forces on Earth. The centaur-like Croll are located in the Middle East, the four-armed Kath-Yal are in Southeast Asia, and the manipulative Te-Mulys are centered in southern Africa. These races have no great love for each other, but they are vehemently opposed to the Gna-Tall. For their part, the Gna-Tall have emphasized the horrific nature of the other races in their interactions with the NDD. The Gna-Tall are the only race discussed here; more information on the many other Saurian races and clans is found in *The Extraterrestrials Sourcebook*.

The Men in Black

It is difficult to describe any aspect of the Saurians, even the Men in Black, without referring to their fantastic technology. These "men" are actually Gna-Tall — not just their minds or personalities, but their actual being. One of their more impressive feats of engineering is the rebuilding of their bodies using their matter-energy conversion technology. This procedure is both challenging for the technicians and taxing on the individual, definitely not something entered into lightly, or for brief periods of time. It is, however, their only way of being among humans without fear of detection. They have also found that it helps in their dealings with the NDD, particularly when working with scientists and engineers. When in this form they eat, breathe, digest, and in most other ways behave as normal humans. Because their main concern is secrecy, they do not enhance their bodies physically much beyond what is normal for a human. Since they mass slightly more for their height than a man, they do have a preference for bulky, brawny physiques. The change is so complete that they could pass a normal physical without raising an eyebrow, and X-rays reveal nothing abnormal. A CAT scan would definitely get some attention, on the other hand. The main thing to remember about the Men in Black is that buried somewhere in there is a Saurian mind, not a human one. The Gna-Tall have worked closely with the NDD to "socialize" their Men in Black to human culture, but it is a slow and fitful process.

For the Gna-Tall and their strong religious beliefs about the sanctity of nature, the body-shop practice is repulsive, a perversion of the natural order. When they arrived on Earth, however, this dictate (as with many others) had to become more flexible. In order to interact with the humans, some Gna-Tall had to accept body a human shape.

Culture

Saurian society is authoritarian and violent. They sever ties to their biological parents, giving their loyalty to a crèche-like communal family. Families are each ruled by a Lord. Interfamily relations are generally cooperative, but controversy and dissent do exist and can cause them to erupt into a state of all-out war. The Saurian culture is based on these consuming but infrequent conflicts, and all Saurians are genetically

wired for combat. Existing in a constant state of tension, relieved only by the outbreak of hostilities, Saurians are always wary of outsiders, unexpected alliances, treachery, and kindness. It is a rare generation that does not experience war. While not the basis of their life, war is nearly inevitable.

Field Technology

Saurians excel at physics, particularly in the areas of fields and waves. Electromagnetism, gravity, nuclear forces, quantum chromodynamics – the most advanced theories of man are but crude approximations of Saurians understanding. It is as if they see a universe different from the one humans understand, and their technology is an outgrowth of this unfamiliar perspective. The Saurians' technology is incomprehensible to most humans, and very few have even the slightest chance of understanding it. Having mastered the smallest constituents of the universe, it is still a rare Saurian that could stand its ground with the top biologists of Earth. Their ability to comprehend the intricacies of life is as impaired as humanity's ability to comprehend matter and energy.

Their technology appears to be organic in nature, but this is a cultural choice rather than a necessity. They think more naturally in terms of extensions of their own bodies rather than separate tools. Thus, the plasma claw, a relatively simple and common weapon to the Saurians, appears novel to humans because it does not fit into their paradigm of tools. Other Saurian technology follows similar patterns, and although their hands are fully as manipulative as human hands, they are more likely to attach an instrument to their wrist or hand than to grasp it with their fingers.

Plasma Claw

The Plasma Claw is an oversized glove shaped to appear as a claw with extended talons. It can be used unpowered (as Punch) to inflict slashing damage of D6(3) x (Strength + 1). Housed in the palm is a mini total-conversion reactor that generates plasma balls from the air around the wearer. These balls are contained in a magnetic bubble that can be manipulated by the wearer using the talons. *EV:* 2/2.

Operating the claw requires the Guns (Plasma Claw) skill. It may be used in three modes:

Mode I: A slow-moving plasma ball is fired that may be controlled by the attacker. It takes a full Turn to generate the ball and it may be held in the claw for three Turns. After firing, the plasma ball may be bent around corners or through openings. It takes a full Turn to reach the target (impacting at the end of the Turn). Mode I balls may not be aimed.

Range: 5/10/15/20/30; *Damage:* D6 x 8(24)

Mode II: This plasma ball is fired at high speed in a direct line. It takes one Turn to generate and must be fired immediately. Mode II balls may be aimed but cannot be controlled.

Range: 5/15/30/50/100; *Damage:* D6 x 8(24)

Mode III: This is a defensive mode. The claw generates a small but powerful magnetic "plate" that the wearer may use to deflect Mode I and II balls. This is treated as a parry defensive maneuver. If successful, the plate provides AV D8 x 6(24).

Field Generator

This Gna-Tall harness creates a defensive force field around the wearer. The protection is a combination of deflector field and force screen. There are three different modes to this item, and only one may be used at a time. It takes two Turns to shift from one mode to another. The Field Generator has an EV of 3/1 and has an internal total-conversion generator with an unlimited lifespan.

Mode I: This mode generates a powerful field around the wearer that defends against plasma, energy, beam, and other nonprojectile weapon attacks. It provides AV (D8 x 4) + 15(31).

Mode II: This field is designed to stop projectile attacks and provides the same AV as Mode I against them.

Mode III: This is a movement option that employs contragravity fields. It allows the Gna-Tall to rise 50 yards per Turn, fall at any desired rate, or hover in place. It is effective within a mile of a body that produces a significant gravitational field. Mode III allows no lateral movement and thus is generally used to complement a Gna-Tall's loping gait and natural strength. In Mode III the Gna-Tall's movement is doubled, minor obstacles and treacherous ground are ignored, and Strength is tripled for purposes of jumping and lifting.

The NDD

The Saurians and the NDD are officially engaged in a technology transfer arrangement, sanctioned by both sides. Each side believes itself to have the upper hand, but there is also a growing sense of trust between the two. The Directorate gains access to high tech and struggles with alien precepts, language, and secrecy. The Gna-Tall gain access to more material then they can process. They rebuild and purport to accept biological knowledge, all the while exploiting their access to human society and knowledge unavailable without human allies.

While the NDD is building upon the ideas given to them by the Gna-Tall, they are also building a military-industrial complex that, slowly but steadily, has the capability of incorporating Gna-Tall technology. More than the biological expertise that the Gna-Tall presume to trade for (in which they are not so far behind, particularly in the area of DNA, and which is available for the taking from the civilian sector anyway), this is what the Gna-Tall want. They are not sure how much time they have before the other Saurian fleets arrive, and they are desperately preparing themselves and the humans for it.

Race Relations

The Saurians are essentially ignorant of the existence of Atlanteans and ambivalent about the Greys. Saurians possess no psychic abilities, so they would have great difficulty identi-

Gna-Tall War-Tech

STR 5	**DEX** 5	**CON** 4
INT 5	**PER** 2	**WIL** 3
LP 65	**End** 44	
Spd 20	**Essence** 25	

Qualities & Drawbacks: Hard to Kill 5, Natural Toughness, Psychic Void

Skills: Brawling 2, Computers 3, Electronics 4, Guns (Plasma Claw) 3, Martial Arts 3, Pilot 3

Natural Weapons: Claws D6(3) x Strength (slashing damage)

fying Atlanteans as anything other than human. Unlike the Atlanteans, the Saurians have no interest in the Greys' psychic abilities because they never have had trouble dealing with them. The Saurians easily bypass their psychic abilities with a mixture of their natural mindset and the esoteric nature of their technology. If a Grey becomes bothersome, the Saurian simply kills it. Further, any attempt to influence a Gna-Tall mentally would require that the Grey be telepathically close to a mind steeped in violence. This is overwhelmingly repulsive to the few Greys who have attempted it. As a result, all Greys keep their distance.

Man in Black

STR 4	**DEX** 3	**CON** 4
INT 3	**PER** 3	**WIL** 3
LP 57	**End** 38	
Spd 14	**Essence** 20	

Qualities & Drawbacks: Hard to Kill 5, Psychic Void

Skills: Brawling 2, Computers 3, Drive (Cars) 2, Electronics 2, Guns (Hand Gun) 2, Guns (Plasma Claw) 3, Martial Arts 3, Pilot 3, Stealth 3, Surveillance 2

Playing the Saurians

Saurians are merciless. Their society revolves around warfare, which is to say that war is always a possibility in their minds, not that they are wanton butchers. Due to this constant threat of war, they all train to fight, and they all train to win. They will not kill when it is merely convenient, but they will not hesitate when it is necessary. This mindset carries over into all aspects of their society – to compromise is to lose. A Saurian would much rather kill and die, than lose.

Saurian technology is capable of many things, the smallest fraction of which is detailed here. Chroniclers should feel free to invent anything that seems appropriate for the scenario or scene. Within their capabilities are matter-energy conversion (the actual basis of most of their power systems), disintegration (they have great proficiency with subatomic fields), beams and fields of all types, and even seeming teleportation (speed-of-light travel). They have yet to achieve faster-than-light travel, although not for lack of trying. They certainly are more likely to discover it than the Atlanteans.

Because they fear humanity's ability in biological warfare, they will never let one of their own fall into human hands, dead or alive. They take extreme measures to prevent a native from being captured, including suicide and mass destruction. To avoid problems of this nature and to protect the secret of their existence, very few ever appear in their natural form even in the most secure areas. When they do, it is because their personal attention is needed, either for overseeing or initiating research and projects. They are less reserved about the Men in Black because, except for their minds, they are entirely human anyway.

DICELESS ROLEPLAYING

USING CARDS INSTEAD OF DICE

For those who want to keep randomness when determining results, cards can be used instead of dice. Each player should start the game with a standard deck of 54 playing cards. The cards are shuffled at the beginning of each game session. When determining an action, draw a card instead of rolling dice.

Numbered cards use their value. If a face card is drawn, consider the result to be a five and draw again. If the next card is another face card, the final result is considered to be a zero. Otherwise, the draw result is considered to be five. If an ace is drawn, use the Rule of 1. If a natural 10 (but not two face cards) is drawn, use the Rule of 10.

Jokers are generally discarded. If the Chronicler wants to add an unexpected element, however, the following rule can be used. If a Joker is drawn, draw another card. If the new card is black, a mishap has occurred. The attempted Task or Test fails in some unexpected and spectacular way, which is left to the Chronicler's imagination. If the second card is red, the action is automatically successful, usually owing to luck rather than skill (again, the Chronicler can use her imagination to give the result an interesting and creative meaning).

Those are the only differences in the basic game. All the other rules described in this book apply normally. Damage rolls are either replaced with the set damage numbers written in parentheses, or the dice are kept for that part of the game.

Player-controlled Outcomes

With card-based gaming, the Chronicler can allow the players more control over their "luck" when performing Tasks or Tests. This is a special subsystem that can be used only with cards.

At the beginning of each game session, each player draws six cards from the deck. The player decides which card she will use on a given Task or Test. If the player thinks the attempt is important and she really wants to succeed at it, she plays the best card in her hand. She cannot draw new cards until her entire hand has been used.

Unless the player's hand is downright terrible, she will be able to choose which Tasks are successful, simply by using her highest-value cards on specific Tasks or Tests. Of course, if she uses up her best cards too quickly, she may be stuck with a couple of aces at a critical point of the story!

When the Rule of 10, the Rule of 1, or face cards come into play, the second card is drawn from the deck, not the hand. Also, if the player initiates an action, the Chronicler may require her to draw from the deck. This eliminates instances of players using up low cards in meaningless actions.

This subsystem is particularly appropriate for dramatic moments. Nobody wants to "fumble" when trying to cast the ritual that might decide the fate of an entire city, for example. It also encourages strategic thinking – the player must decide when to play her best cards and when to accept failure with good grace. By taking into account the needs of the story, the player may decide her Cast Member should fail at certain points, adding to the drama of the game.

This optional rule requires that the players spend some time deciding what cards to use in a given situation – they still do not know how difficult the situation may be, or what the opposition may draw against them. It usually helps move the story along in a dramatically appropriate way, as the Cast Member tends to have "good luck" when the story calls for it more often than not. On the other hand, this method cuts down on the uncertainty of the moment and may end up having the players think more about strategy than the flow of the story.

STORY-DRIVEN ROLEPLAYING

For Chroniclers and players who want to avoid random rolls or card drawing entirely, the **Unisystem** can be used in the Story-driven Method. The Chronicler assigns outcomes dependent on the flow of the Story and the basic abilities of the player.

Task Resolution

Story-driven Method games use a straight number comparison. If the character's appropriate Attributes and skills are equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the Task or Test is successful. The Chronicler determines the Difficulty Number based on the needs of the story and on how detailed and creative the player is in describing her Cast Member's action. If the roleplaying part of the action is good enough, the numbers involved should not be a factor, and the action should be successful automatically.

DIFFICULTY NUMBERS TABLE

Type of Task	Difficulty Number
Easy	1–2
Challenging	3–5
Difficult	6–8
Very Difficult	9–10
Heroic	11–12
Impossible	13–15

Stacy the servile handmaid, played by Jenny, wants to talk (using her Smooth Talking skill) a security guard into letting her sneak into one of the master bedrooms. Jenny gives a great performance as Stacy, making many excuses and servile remarks that show the guard that he is really in charge. The Chronicler does not bother comparing numbers or results – the guard, who, feeling suitably superior, lets her pass.

Raven, a desperate escaped prisoner, is played by Stuart. He is trying to break into a warehouse to secure some supplies. The Chronicler decides that this is a Difficult Task and asks Stuart what Raven's combined Dexterity and Lock Picking skill is. Raven's Dexterity is four; his Lock Picking five. The total of nine is better than what is required for a Difficult Task (usually 6 to 8), so Raven is successful.

When two characters are using skills against each other, the higher combination of Attribute and skill wins. Only special circumstances alter this. A weaker fighter who goes on the defensive and is extra careful may last for a while before being defeated by her stronger enemy. A player who comes up with a good "dirty trick" or tactic may prevail against superior odds. It is description, narrative skills, and the Chronicler's judgment that are the final determinants of most outcomes.

Diceless Damage

In the Story-driven Method, damage can be applied using the fixed values (listed in parentheses in all weapon or damage descriptions). Alternatively, damage can be adjusted to suit the dramatic needs of the game. Here, a light wound is a cut on a limb, a nasty bruise, or a cracked rib. It is not immediately incapacitating, but requires medical or supernatural help or it may worsen in time. Most weapons that inflict an average of less than 10 points of damage cause light wounds.

A serious wound can do a number of things. It can drop the target immediately (the victim may or may not survive the ordeal) or it can kill the victim if no medical help is available (the victim may still continue to move and act for several minutes or even hours, however). Being shot or stabbed in the torso area is the most common serious wound. The Chronicler decides if the victim falls down, either as the result of physical shock or just the psychological realization that she has been injured, or whether she carries on with her actions (people have been known to continue fighting or running even after sustaining mortal wounds). As a rule of thumb, any weapon whose average damage is 10–20 points inflicts serious wounds on a direct hit. Consider most handguns, regardless of their average damage, to inflict serious wounds in the torso area. Even small-caliber bullets can do a lot of damage by bouncing around the victim's body.

A critical wound instantly drops the victim and in all probability kills her. Critical wounds include beheading, a large-caliber bullet hit to the head, being cut in half by a train, and similar massive injury.

CONVERSION RULES

CONVERTING CHARACTERS

Converting original *Conspiracy X* characters over to a **Unisystem** *Conspiracy X* campaign is a relatively simple process. The following guidelines are instructive, but conversion necessarily involves some estimation and guesswork.

Attributes

The original *Conspiracy X* game system used a very similar level of scores to the **Unisystem**, but the scores do not convert on a one-to-one basis.

The Attribute Conversion Tables shows the relationship between "classic" *Conspiracy X* and the **Unisystem**. Numbers in parentheses show the widest range that may be employed by a flexible Chronicler.

It is suggested that characters be converted using the table above, adjusted to ensure that their total Attribute points add up to 15 or 20 points, depending on the campaign level (Pre-Heroic or Heroic).

A second table shows how the different Attributes are related (or their closest **Unisystem** equivalent).

Luck

The **Unisystem** has no Luck attribute. It is generally ignored, unless the *Conspiracy X* character's Bad Luck or Good Luck numbers are at the extreme ends. A Good Luck number of 3–6 translates into a Good Luck Quality with a level equal to the Good Luck number. Any Bad Luck number under 11 imposes the Bad Luck Drawback with a level equal to 12 minus the Bad Luck number.

Influence

Influence level translates into an appropriate Influence Quality. Influence is expensive in original *Conspiracy X*, but one level is provided for free. This is not reflected in the **Unisystem** with the prerequisites for the Influence Quality, although the first level is usually provided within the Profession packages.

Professions

In *Conspiracy X*, Professions, Credentials, and Department/Infrastructures grant the ability to learn certain skills at certain levels. This is ignored when converting characters. They also provide Influence Icons/Spheres of Influence and Pulling Strings, which is taken into account with the **Unisystem** Profession package.

Pulling Strings remain the same. Some of the more obscure, specialized, or unique *Conspiracy X* Pulling Strings have not been detailed here. These should be reworked according to the Chronicler's discretion.

Traits

Skills, trainings, and other traits should be matched up with their **Unisystem** equivalents. The Abilities Conversion Table approximates equivalent character abilities for those presented in the *Conspiracy X* rulebook. In the case of skills, the levels are translated on a point-for-point basis. The player and Chronicler should look at this as purely advisory and come to a suitable compromise when multiple options are presented.

ATTRIBUTE CONVERSION TABLES

Original Conspiracy X Attribute	Description	Unisystem Equivalent
1	Crippling	0 (0–1)
2	Below Average	1 (1–2)
3	Average	2 (2–3)
4	Way above average	5 (4–5)
5	Human Peak	6

Original Conspiracy X Attribute	Unisystem Conspiracy X Attribute
Strength	Strength
Size	Constitution
Agility & Reflexes (average)	Dexterity
Intelligence	Intelligence
Willpower	Willpower
Perception	Perception

ABILITIES CONVERSION TABLE

Conspiracy X Skill	Unisystem Skill
Athletics	Acrobatics (or Sports)
Autofire	Guns
Boating	Piloting
Brawling	Brawling
Cartography	Craft (Cartography)
Computer Programming	Computer Programming
Computer Use	Computers
Cryptology	Science (Cryptography)
Cryptozoology	Myths and Legends (Cryptozoology)
Demolitions	Demolition
Diplomacy	Smooth Talking
Disguise	Disguise
Drive	Drive (Type)
Engineering	Engineer or Electronics
Escape	Escape
First Aid	First Aid
Forensics	Science (Forensics)
Forgery	Craft (Forgery)
Gun Fu	Martial Arts (Gun Fu)
Gunnery	Guns
Heavy Weapons	Guns
Humanities	Humanities (Type)
Hypnosis	Hypnosis
Image Interpretation	Research/Investigation or Electronic Surveillance
Language	Language (Type)
Lockpicking	Lockpicking
Martial Arts	Martial Arts
Medical	Medicine (Type)
Meditation	Trance
Melee Weapon	Hand Weapon (Type)
MHIC-EDOM	Electronics (MHIC-EDOM)
Occult	Occultism
Parapsychology	Science (Parapsychology)
Photography	Surveillance or Craft (Photography)
Pilot	Piloting
Psychotron	Electronics (Psychotron)
Repair/Build	Mechanic
Research	Research/Investigation
Ritual	Ritual (Type)
Science	Science (Type)
Shadow	Surveillance
Small Arms	Guns
Stealth	Stealth
Throw	Throwing (Type)
Tracking	Tracking
UFOlogy	Myth and Legend (UFOlogy)
Video	Electronic Surveillance

Conspiracy X Training	Unisystem Equivalent
Awareness	Acute Senses or Situational Awareness
Biohazard Control	Medicine (Biohazard Control)
Communication	Electronics (Communications) or Systems Operations (Communications)
Investigation	Research/Investigation or Surveillance
Navigation	Any suitable Piloting/Driving with Intelligence
Politics	Bureaucracy or Humanities (Politics)
Parachutist	Sports (Parachuting)
Rappelling	Climbing or Sports
Savoir Faire	Charisma or good roleplaying
SCUBA Diving	Sports (SCUBA)
Surveillance	Surveillance or Electronic Surveillance
Survival	Survival
Swim	Swimming
Zero-gravity Movement	Acrobatics or Sports (Freefall)

Conspiracy X Psych Profile	Unisystem Quality/Drawback
Cautious (Extreme)	Psychological Problems (Cowardice)
Code	Honorable
Corrupted by the Supernatural	Corrupted by the Supernatural
Creature of Habit	Psychological Problems (Obsession – Compulsive)
Flashbacks	Flashbacks
Homicidal Tendencies	Psychological Problems (Cruelty)
Killer Instinct	Psychological Problems (Cruelty) or Emotional Problems (Anger)
Impulsive (Extreme)	Psychological Problems (Recklessness)
Multiple Personality Disorder	Psychological Problems (Delusions – MPD)
Pacifist (Extreme)	Honorable
Paranoid Delusions (Acute)	Psychological Problems (Paranoia)
Phobia (Major)	Psychological Problems (Phobia)
Schizophrenia	Psychological Problems (Delusions)

Conspiracy X Medical History	Unisystem Quality/Drawback/Skill
Adrenaline Surge	Adrenaline Surge
Ambidextrous	Ambidexterity
Atlantean Nanotech	Atlantean Nanotech
Deep Sleeper	Sleep Disorders (Deep Sleeper)
Distinguishing Mark	–
Extraordinarily Average	–
High Metabolism	High/Low Metabolism
High Pain Threshold	Resistance (Pain), Nerves of Steel
Light Sleeper	Sleep Disorders (Light Sleeper)
Low Pain Threshold	Psychological Problems (Cowardice), Vulnerability (Pain)
Physical Training	Hard to Kill, high Constitution
Psychic Burnout	Psychic Burnout
Runner or Swimmer	Running or Swimming
Slow Metabolism	High/Low Metabolism

Conspiracy X Talent and Ability	Unisystem Quality/Drawback/Skill
Animal Animosity	Animal Animosity
Animal Empathy	Animal Empathy
Photographic Memory	Photographic Memory
Psychic	Psychic
Psychic Link	Psychic Link
Psychic Sink	Psychic Sink
Psychic Void	Psychic Void
Quick Draw	Fast Reaction Time
Strong ESP	Extra attempt at ESP Rhine Tests
Supernatural Focus	Supernatural Focus
Time and Direction Sense	Situational Awareness

Conspiracy X Background and Resources	Unisystem Quality/Drawback/Skill
Can't Swim	No Swimming skill
Combat Experience	–
Credential Connection	Contacts (appropriate to Profession)
Criminal Connection	Contacts
Criminal Contact	Contacts
Dead	Multiple Identities (Dead)
Disgraced	Disgraced Drawback
Favor	Contacts
Guardian Angel	Guardian Angel Quality
Haunted	Haunted Drawback
Intelligence Contact	Contacts
Media Connection	Contacts
Media Contact	Contacts
Media Leak	Front Page News Pulling String
Military Contact	Contacts
New Identity	Official Identity
No Records	Official Identity
Notoriety	Notoriety
Police Connection	Contacts
Police Contact	Contacts
Puppet	Obligation Drawback
Science/Research Contact	Contacts
Severed Ties	–
Veteran	Add 10 points of skills
Wanted by the Law	Adversary
Watched	Adversary

CONVERTING CELLS

The items listed in the original *Conspiracy X* all appear in **Chapter Three: Ops Center** of this book. Little adjustment need be made.

CONVERTING RULES

Test Basics

No comparative value exists for Difficulty Levels in the **Unisystem**. This is best converted by applying a modifier to the Test or Task.

Conspiracy X Difficulty Level	Unisystem Modifier
Df1	+4
Df2	+2
Df3	0
Df4	–2
Df5	–4
Df6	–6

Variable Tests

A Variable Test should be treated as a normal Task or Test with no modifier. The most prevalent Variable Test is for Willpower. This becomes a Simple or Difficult Willpower Test (depending upon circumstances).

Research

Research in the original *Conspiracy X* covered a variety of subjects and areas. The **Unisystem** can easily accommodate this. The Chronicler should decide how many Success Levels are needed for a breakthrough in the research. The agents can then pool their Success Levels or repeat the attempts until enough levels are gained.

Damage

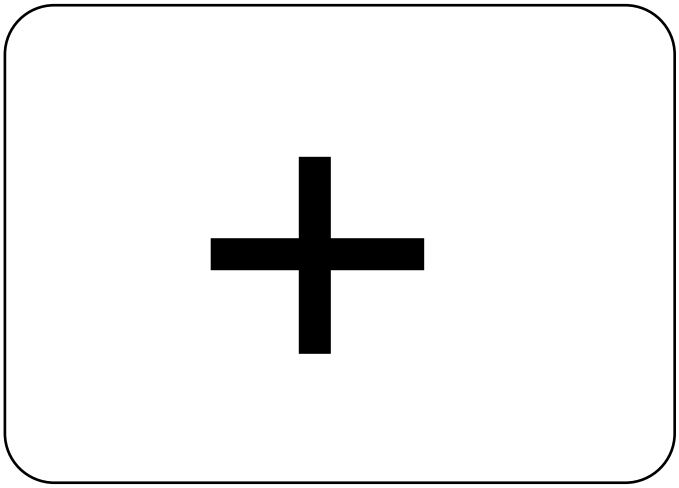
Conspiracy X damage ratings translate into Life Points in the **Unisystem**. Use the stats given for the equivalent **Unisystem** weapon.

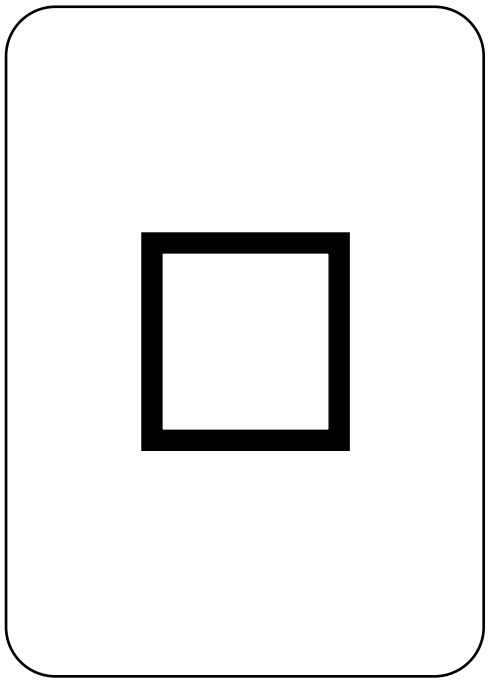
Psychics

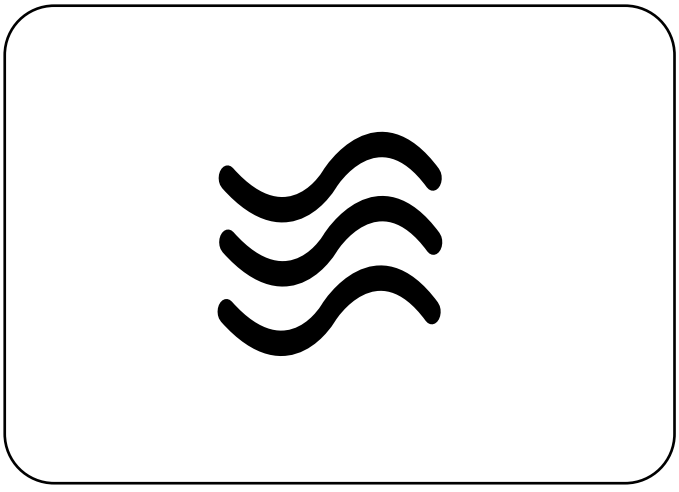
For those who are interested in the full range of psychic powers, the original *Conspiracy X* disciplines and trainings descriptions (if using *Shadows of the Mind*) may be retained. In that case, characters should keep their Psi Point allotments and their classifications in psychic powers. These powers to the **Unisystem** are covered in *The Paranormal Sourcebook*, where the full range of **Unisystem** psychic powers (and more) are presented.

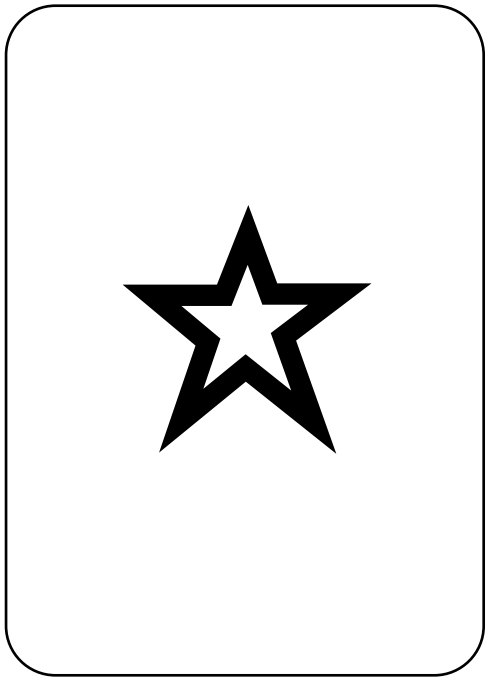
Rhine Tests may be retained exactly as is or converted to a **Unisystem** Task roll. If a Task roll conversion is desired, an R1 Test can be a normal **Unisystem** Task, an R2 Test the same with a +1 modifier, R3 as a +2, etc.

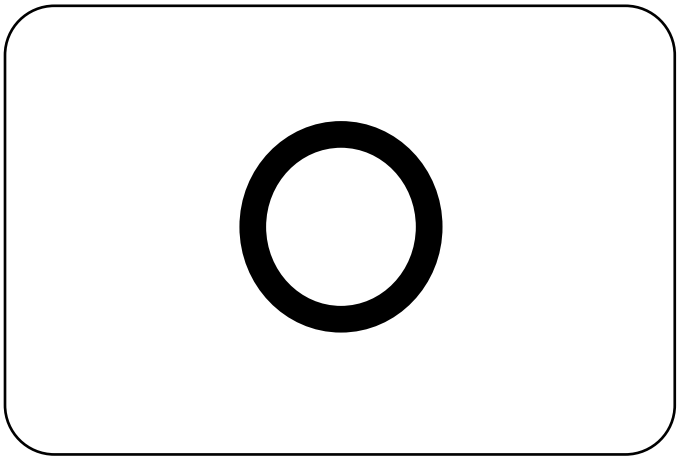
ZENER CARDS











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On the surface, the world looks very much like the one outside your bedroom window.
The same people are walking the same dirty streets, the same animals rummage through the same garbage,
and the same mindless drivel is shown on the same television stations.

Sometimes that world just doesn't seem right.
You wake up in the morning and get the feeling that something isn't as it shuld be.
Why do certain figures appear out of nowhere and become famous overnight?
Why do the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer?
What is the government really paying for when it shells out 75 bucks for a screwdriver?
Why is it the more questions you ask the less answers you get?
Why is it any answer always leads to another question?

Sometimes you cannot see what defines your world.
This is the nature of conspiracies.
This is the nature of Conspiracy X.

Conspiracy X takes place in a world of dark secrets and hidden agendas where the only certainty is nothing is what it seems. The president might not be human, and the sign carrying paranoid on the street corner ranting about CIA mind control satellites may very well be right.

In other words, a world just like yours, if you could see beyond the lies.

PRAY IT'S ONLY A GAME.

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Produced and published by Eden Studios, Inc.

UNISYSTEM
GAME SYSTEM

$35.00 (US)
EDN5600
ISBN 1-891153-53-6